PHILIPPINE DAILY
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GRAVE WORK Two women spruce up the grave of their departed loved ones at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. EDWIN BACASMAS

Cut in cooking gas next

PRESIDENTIAL daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo (right) with rumored fiancé Luigi Bertran (left) and fashion designer Rhett Eala (center) during the recent launch of Collezione C2's My Pilipinas series. ALEX MENDOZA/CONTRIBUTOR

Luli's mom mum on wedding

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is keeping mum on the reported upcoming wedding of her daughter Evangeline Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo to former investment banker J. Alejandro "Luigi" Bertran.

Friends of Bertran said the wedding is set for January next year in Bohol. They said the two have been dating for several years. One friend described Bertran as "very well-mannered and very smart and serious about Luli."

Meanwhile, sources told the Inquirer that Luli had confirmed to a very close friend that she is indeed getting married. But Luli said she did not want to give any de-

LIBYA A6

GMA hits critics over Bolante brouhaha

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday took a swipe at personalities pushing for a Senate inquiry into the P728-million fertilizer fund scam allegedly orchestrated in 2004 by her then agriculture undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante.

In a speech during the signing of the Credit Information System Law in Malacañang, the President said lawmakers should not engage in "grandstanding" and instead focus on legislation that would cushion the impact of the global financial crunch.

"We cannot waste time on po-

GMA HITS A6

Rainy day today; bring umbrellas

By Alcuin Papa and Tarra Quismundo

EXPECT WET AND RAINY weather today so bring umbrellas and raincoats when visiting your departed loved ones.

This was the advice of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) to the public making the trek to cemeteries for the annual observance of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (Nov. 1 and Nov. 2).

RAIN!! A6

DOE: Expect more oil price rollbacks

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING THE MOST SUBSTANTIAL DIESEL price rollback yet, consumers can expect another early Christmas gift as prices of cooking gas are expected to drop significantly by mid- or end-November.

The reduction in the international contract price of liquefied petroleum gas for November has been as big—by the equivalent of more than P100—that LPG suppliers have a lot of leeway to cut prices, explained Zenaida Monsada, director of the Department of Energy's oil industry management bureau.

"The drop in the contract price was huge, so we're expecting a rollback. We'll probably feel that by the middle or the end of the month," Monsada said in a telephone interview yesterday.

This was confirmed by Petron public affairs manager Virginia Ilustrisimo who said the oil refiner would be slashing LPG prices in November.

But she did not say when the rollback would be effected and by how much prices would be cut.

CUT IN A11

Grief over losing children at mall unites 3 mothers

By DJ Yap and Nancy Carvajal

THREE GRIEVING MOTHERS now find themselves connected by the thread of friendship that once linked the children they lost to the explosions at the Glorietta 2 mall a year ago.

In separate interviews, Jeanette de Gracia, 48, Zenaida Vidana, 55, and Mercedes de Leon, 49, said they had found solace in one another as they continued to cope with the loss of their children, three good friends who were among the 11 dead.

"We want to continue the relationship that our children had," said De Gracia, whose daughter Jec Ann was 25 when she died.

De Leon, who lost 23-year-old Maureen, the eldest in her brood of four, said she and the two other mothers had become "like sisters."

"A few weeks ago, I just mentioned in passing that I wasn't

GRIEF A6

RP priest in sex case banned in New York

NEW YORK—A visiting Roman Catholic priest accused in a $25-million lawsuit of luring a distraught divorcee into having a seven-month affair has been barred from serving in the city, church officials said Thursday. (See related story on Page A17.)

The accuser, Judith Rodriguez Lyttwyn, reported the affair in August but refused to identify the priest, said the officials, who learned it was the Rev. Elvis Flasco when the suit was filed earlier this week.

"Despite repeated requests on the part of diocesan officials, she neither would name the priest nor would she identify the parish in which the priest had served," according to a statement from the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The church officials declined

RP PRIEST A11

Pagcor man almost runs over Manila's top cop

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A 38-YEAR-OLD MAN SPORTing an "Office of the President" decal on his windshield spent a few hours in jail yesterday after he allegedly tried to run over Manila's police chief and two aides who were directing traffic in Quiapo, police said.

If Gerald del Rosario got off lightly after a few hours in jail, it was because the cool-headed

PAGCOR A11

1 key state decides White House race

WASHINGTON—BARACK Obama's prospects for defeating John McCain and becoming the 44th American president may be apparent shortly after the first polls close Tuesday in the eastern United States.

An Obama victory in just one of four key states that voted Republican in 2004—Ohio, Florida, Virginia or North Carolina—would leave McCain with almost insurmountable hurdles to winning the race.

The US presidency is decided not by a nationwide popular vote, but by a state-by-state tally of electoral votes, which are allocated to each state roughly according to population. The winner needs at least 270 electoral votes.

With the election only four days away, Obama is likely to take all the states won by fellow Democrat John Kerry, when he lost to George W. Bush in 2004. In addition, he is heavily favored in two states won by

1 KEY STATE A11

MONA LISA DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE Hollywood rewrite looking drop dead gorgeous strikes a pose during a street party parade Thursday on P. Burgos Street in Makati City. NINFA LEGARDA

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Sunny or cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of Luzon will have cloudy skies with rain showers in the afternoon.

Manila	Partly Cloudy	Kalibo	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo	Mostly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rain	Cebu	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rain	Dumaguete	Cloudy with Rain
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rain	Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy
Virac	Cloudy with Rain	Davao	Cloudy with Rain

SWERTRES

2 PM	5 PM	9 PM
2	6	8

FOUR DIGIT

2 PM	5 PM	9 PM
5	6	8

EZ2

2 PM	5 PM	9 PM
19	0	3
	6	3
0	0	4

MEGALOTTO 6/45

5 11 21 22 27 38

P4,500,000.00

PNP mum on De la Paz travel money

Can't say if ex-comptroller has returned P274,070 issued to him

WHAT'S INSIDE

CREDIT INFO system now a law /A3

AFP AMMO dump hit by fire /A7

RP SPOTS top 'Wonders' list /A3

By Tarra Quismundo

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) seemed to have buried the "sum generalis" issue yesterday as it geared for a busy weekend securing the nation's cemeteries.

Officials in Camp Crame could not say if retired Police Director Eliseo de la Paz, the controversial ex-comptroller, has indeed returned the P274,070 travel allowance authorized to be released for each of the eight officials who flew to an Interpol meeting in Manila earlier last month.

The Public Information Office had no update to give up to press time yesterday. De la Paz's lawyer, Raul Mañosca, also said he had no information about it.

The PNP had announced Thursday that De la Paz, the lowest official in the roster of the P6.9-million travel fund scandal, was to return his travel allowance yesterday.

The cash to be given back is part of the separate P2.1 million authorized for the 36 Directorial Staff and Command Group officers who flew to the Interpol General Assembly.

PNP chief Director General Jesus Verzosa had ordered the entire delegation to repay the PNP disbursement, which the Department of Interior and Local Government had maintained was a legal fund release.

The questioned P6.9 million (US$1,000 earned cash advance meaningful encounters with the Russian government after customs officials refused the amount found in De la Paz's possession in his stay out of the Moscow International Airport. Verzosa had said the money was meant to purchase spy gear but released illegally.

Thursday delegation members Francisco Ulberto Ilarde Jr., the operations chief, and Gemma Isidro, human resources and doctrine development chief, returned to the PNP Finance Service a total of P274,070.

Ilarde refunded the full amount while Isidro repaid P192,000 with the promise of paying the rest within a month.

Sen. Francis Escudero, meanwhile, said the move of "mere generosity" to refund the purported cash advances drawn from the PNP coffers is a "good first step, but not enough."

Escudero, chair of the finance committee on justice and human rights, said by phone that De la Paz and the rest of the eight-man PNP delegation to the Interpol general assembly only had themselves to answer "simple questions."

"Where did the money come from, for what purpose and why the lax procedure in handling huge sums of cash?" said Escudero.

Escudero said Verzosa and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno were not yet off the hook. With a report by Michael Lim Ubac

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BSP acts to help ease pressure on peso, temper banks' losses

By Doris C. Dumlao

BRACING FOR AN ESCALATING global financial turbulence, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved new measures to ease pressure on the sharply weakening peso as well as to help temper banks' losses from depressed asset values.

In a news briefing yesterday, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank had granted a temporary relief on the booking of losses arising from banks' foreign currency deposit units (FCDU) assets to stop banks from retrenching for US dollars at the foreign exchange market to meet asset cover requirements.

Extraordinary

"This is another measure taken by the [BSP's policy-making] Monetary Board in recognition of the extraordinary circumstances in the global financial market that have created unprecedented market volatility," Tetangco said.

An FCDU is a unit of a local bank or of a local branch of a foreign bank authorized by the BSP to engage in foreign exchange denominated transactions, such as accepting foreign currency deposits and granting foreign currency loans.

The FCDU system's deposits—such as those placed by overseas Filipinos and their families, exporters or multinational corporations—are considered the country's second layer of foreign reserves.

As an additional one-time regulatory relief, Tetangco said the BSP had given banks with exposure to structured products a more flexible way of booking market losses from these instruments.

In the US and Europe, losses from exposure to similar sophisticated instruments had caused financial woes for many large financial institutions and even drove some into bankruptcy.

Challenges

"Conditions in the global economy continue to raise challenges in addition to financial market disruptions—which have intensified—there is a growing consensus over a major downturn in global economic activity," Tetangco said.

Restarting the peso closed weak-er at P48.94 to the US dollar from Thursday's finish of 48.605 despite a gentlemen's agreement among commercial banks to reduce the demand for US dollars at the spot foreign exchange market.

"While the downturn is expected to be more pronounced in the advanced economies, growth in emerging and developing economies is also likely to weaken after years of strong performance," Tetangco said.

In recent days, monetary dealers said the peso's depreciation was aggravated by rising demand from banks hoping to dollars to cover their FCDU assets.

Under current regulations, banks' FCDUs have to maintain a 100 percent asset cover which means that they have to match every $1 worth of such asset with a corresponding $1 in liquid assets as buffer.

Sharp drop

Because of the sharp drop in the value of offshore Philippine bonds used as cover for these FCDUs, banks have been buying US dollars from the open foreign exchange market to cover the shortfall in asset cover.

"To provide relief to the banks, what we're saying is that from the effectivity of the circular, any securities loss can be added back to the asset cover," Tetangco said.

This means that for a limited period until March 31 next year, banks will be spared from booking losses arising from the marking-to-market of assets and liabilities under their FCDU books.

"This will help stabilize the foreign exchange market," Tetangco said.

The peso has depreciated by 13.6 percent against the US dollar since the start of this year, making it among Asia's worst performing currencies this year.

SC upholds dismissal of overweight PAL flight steward, but awards him back wages

By Norman Bordadora

THE SUPREME COURT HAS UPheld the Philippine Airlines' dismissal of an overweight flight steward more than 15 years ago.

At six-and-"several pardons," however, the High Tribunal went on to award the former employee, Armando Tenorgio, back wages amounting to half of his monthly salary for every year he served by the national flag-carrier some 30 years back.

"The biggest problem with an overweight cabin attendant is the possibility of impeding passengers from evacuating the aircraft, should the occasion call for it," read the decision of the Court's Third Division penned by Justice Ruben Reyes.

"The job of a cabin attendant during emergencies is to speedily get the passengers out of the aircraft safely. Being overweight necessarily impedes mobility. Indeed, in an emergency situation, seconds can mean calmin attendants are dealing with, not minutes," it added.

The tribunal upheld the Court of Appeals in reversing the earlier decisions by the labor arbiter and the National Labor Relations Commission finding Tenorgio's dismissal illegal and ordering him to be reinstated to the company.

"Those few seconds can translate into lives lost lives. Evacuation might slow down a full-capacity double-bodied cabin attendant in blocking the narrow aisles. These possibilities are not remote," the Supreme Court said.

Court records showed that Tenorgio's woes started in 1981 when he was asked to go on an extended vacation leave to address his weight problem. After failing to meet the required weight he was asked to go on another unpaid leave until November 1985.

He met the required weight but his height and was allowed to return to work.

"But petitioner's weight problem occurred. He again went on leave without pay from Oct. 17, 1988 to February 2009," the Court said.

Tenorgio's struggles to keep the weight guide lasted until the 1990's. PAL management required him to submit to regular weight check but failed to do so.

On June 18, 1993, petitioner was formally informed by PAL that due to his inability to retain his ideal weight "and considering the utmost leniency" extended to him "which spanned a period of almost five years," his services were considered terminated effective immediately," the Court said.

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GMA signs credit info system bill into law

Data on credit-worthiness of borrowers will soon be readily available to banks

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo talks to Sen. Edgardo Angara after the signing ceremony of Republic Act 9510 or the Credit Information System Act. Also with the President is Deputy Speaker Arnulfo Fuentes (right).

By TJ Burgonio

SOON, DATA ON THE CREDIT-WORTHINESS of borrowers will be readily available to banks, easing the processing of credit to small and medium enterprises even as the country braces for the global economic slowdown.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday signed into law the credit information system bill which sets up an information database on the credit standing of borrowers.

Republic Act 9510 or the Credit Information System Law establishes the Credit Information Corp. (CIC), which will compile credit data and act as a central registry of credit information.

"Congress has given our people an early Christmas gift through this Credit Information System Law," the President said during the signing of the law in Malacañang.

A credible and comprehensive information system run by the CIC would cut credit processing times, and therefore, lower transaction costs, she said.

Expanded reach

"It will reduce the risk of defaults with better credit information. It will reduce the credit premiums charged by lenders and increase lending volumes. It will help expand the reach of credit to small and medium enterprises," she said.

The administration bill, approved by Congress last month, was aimed at addressing a major problem of the Philippine credit market: lack of comprehensive credit-related information.

"The low ratio of the most propitious time since there is some credit exposure among lenders today because of the credit crisis. But with this, I think it will open up the credit more a little bit more," Sen. Edgardo Angara, one of the principal authors, told reporters.

Since the credit information will be available online, small and medium-scale borrowers will now have "a readier and easier access" to credit, the senator said.

"The lender will know, with the click of a mouse, the credit history of every borrower," he said.

The principle behind the law was to "put up a credit information database that would facilitate financial transactions," Secretary Cirgo Fernando, Presidential Management Staff chief, said in a text message.

Banks tend to be "selective" and hold back credit amid the global financial crunch. With the establishment of the credit information database, that would change, officials said.

In view of the current financial crunch, the measure is very relevant. If there is credit information, there would be transparency and banks would know the financial standing of an institution," Fernando said.

Under the law, the CIC, to be chaired by the chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Commission, will receive and consolidate basic credit data and serve as a central registry of credit information.

This registry in turn, would provide access to reliable standardized information on the credit history and financial condition of borrowers.

Those that will have access to these data are the financial institutions, entities engaged in the business of credit reports, entities that handle loan processing, and borrowers.

RP spots on top of 'Wonders' list

FILIPINO NETIZENS ARE CALLED ON TO choose only one Philippine list in the online search for the New 7 Wonders of Nature as local tourist favorites dominate top five positions.

As of Oct. 28 standings, the Puerto Princesa Underground River in Palawan was No. 1, Chocolate Hills in Bohol was No. 4, and Tubbataha Reef in Palawan was No. 5.

The other candidates in the top seven are Ha Long Bay of Vietnam, 2nd; Cox's Bazar Beach in Bangladesh, 3rd; Al Hara Oasis of Saudi Arabia, 6th; and the Ganges River shared by India and Bangladesh at 7th.

Though not in the running for the top seven spots, Mayon Volcano at No. 11 is better than the equally iconic Mount Everest—shared by China and Nepal—at No. 13 and Japan's Mount Fuji at No. 20.

Also, the Department of Tourism, which has cited the search as a big opportunity to pump up the volume of visitor arrivals, urged more Filipinos to cast their votes and visit the three tourist havens to help them to choose which one to champion.

"The response of people and support from our fellow Filipinos are very evident in this new era, and we can expect increased tourist awareness of country's beautiful treasures," said Tourism Secretary Ace Durano.

"Having three nominees from the country gives us a strong hope to be included in the national qualification round, set next year," Durano said.

Eduardo Jaque Jr., Tourism Undersecretary in charge of planning and promotions, explained that only one nominee from each country will be allowed to proceed to the next stage.

"According to the organizers, countries with more than one nominee will be voting until the end of 2008 to choose the national representative that is allowed to continue," Jaque said.

"Though choosing between these three diverse yet equally unique wonders may be a difficult task, Filipinos should carry on in casting their votes and making their mark," he added. —Jhannel M. Domingo

High court orders judges to visit jails monthly

EXECUTIVE AND PRESIDING judges are now required to personally check on inmates and jail conditions under their jurisdiction on a monthly basis, according to a posting on the Supreme Court website.

Under the new jail visitation and inspection guidelines released by the high court, the judges are also required to check on inmates' health conditions and determine whether the right of an accused to privately consult with legal counsel is being observed.

These new guidelines specify a uniform procedure in the judges' conduct of jail checks and in their submission of required reports on the matter.

The guidelines will prevent illegal or unnecessary detentions and "ensure the preservation of the dignity and well-being of detainees," the high court said.

Definitions

Chief Justice Reynato Puno says the issuance of the new guidelines as part of the actions taken by the Supreme Court following its unprecedented "Forum on Increasing Access to Justice, Bridging Gaps and Removing Roadblocks" held on June 30-July 1.

In a trial court, an executive judge performs not only judicial but also administrative functions, including the supervision of the clerk of court.

Under the trial court are branches each headed by a presiding judge, whose main role is to perform judicial functions.

Presiding judges are required by the new guidelines to gather data from jail inspections, submit monthly reports that include information needing immediate action, and respond quickly to conditions unfavorable to detainees or certain matters within their competence without the need of the executive judge's intervention.

Executive judges, on the other hand, are required to look into data on jail conditions, ensure that the presiding judges are conducting jail inspections, submit the compliance reports of judges every quarter, and require jail wardens and heads of detention centers to submit monthly reports on the numbers of detainees with cases pending in the courts.

Likewise, they are to check on the detention centers' capacity, sanitary facilities, ventilation, food, medicines, access to health care, and visiting hours.

The salaries of those judges who fail to comply with the new guidelines will be withheld without prejudice to administrative sanctions or criminal charges that the high court may impose on or file against them.

Numbers

As of 2006, there were a total of 1,515 executive and presiding judges serving in the regional trial courts and metropolitan and municipal trial courts nationwide.

In that year, there were 68,732 inmates distributed among 1,882 jail facilities, including 1,561 district jails, 95 city jails, and 226 municipal jails. Female inmates also included four female and youth inmates.

In 2006, the jail population was highest in the Interned Capital Region (NCR)—21,737 inmates cramped in only 13 jail facilities.

The most congested jails in the NCR in that year were the Caloocan City Jail (with an ideal capacity of 126 but a total inmate population of 1,465), Quezon City Jail (with an ideal capacity of 415 but a total population of 3,220), Mandaluyong City Jail (with an ideal capacity of 77 but a total population of 500), Navotas Municipal Jail (with an ideal capacity of 60 but a total population of 430), Quezon City Jail Farm (with an ideal capacity of 84 but a total population of 960), and Valenzuela City Jail (with an ideal capacity of 73 but a total population of 400). Report from Norman Bordadora and Inquirer Research

Grief over losing children at mall unites 3 mothers

Front page A1

healing well, and they came by my house to take me to the clinic. That's how close we've become," De Leon said.

Yolanda, mother of 27-year-old Nikki Gerala, said they were "drawing strength from each other by reminiscing the good times we (all) shared with our children."

"To think that they were not even acquainted before the tragedy. But now their deep and unwavering pain have become an enduring bond."

Separate ways today

On this day, however, they will go separate ways.

De Leon will visit Joe Ann's grave in a Nueva Ecija cemetery an hour away from where De Leon will visit Maureen's grave in the same province. Yolanda will be with her family in their Malabon City home where an urn holds Nikki's ashes.

"We will light candles and pray that our children are well wherever they are right now," said De Gracia, who has three other children.

She said the friendship was a way to keep the memory of her daughter alive. "It's like I can stay close to Joe Ann when I'm with the mothers of her friends."

On Oct. 31, the eve of the first anniversary of the tragedy that claimed their children's lives, the three mothers met at De Leon's residence in Lagro, Quezon City. There they prayed and shared stories, but mostly reminisced about their children, De Gracia said.

The next day, the Leon and De Gracia joined the families of the other victims in a special ceremony at Greenhills 2.

Lunch at the mall

Per De Leon's account, Maureen, Joe Ann and Nikki first met as an information technology company and became best friends.

"They met every week to catch up on each other's lives and to discuss their plans. Even when they were their separate ways and began working for different companies, they kept in touch," she said.

That fateful Friday, the three met up at Glorietta 2 for one of their usual lunches—a practice that evolved into a tradition since they became friends.

Up to now, De Leon is unable to visit the mall where her dear "Mau" died.

"My knees start shaking. I can't go back there. I can't even go to Mikati anymore. I can't take it. I just can't take it," she said, her voice breaking.

De Leon said Maureen had wanted to give her family a better life. "We didn't ask her, but on her own volition, she decided to take care of the schooling of [one of her siblings]."

"She was a good child," the mother added. "I don't say this just because she's dead. We were close. She's just with her. She was a kind child."

Happy picture

A blown-up photograph of a smiling smiling Joe Ann is pinned on a filing room wall in De Gracia's home in Cainuru, Caloocan City.

The picture is illuminated by two yellow light bulbs.

Seeing the picture—"the first thing you see upon entering the house"—does not make the mother sad.

"It's a happy picture," De Gracia said. "I always talk to her, and I tell her I miss her so much. I tell her that I hope she's okay."

De Gracia, who is separated from her husband, said that if not for the tragedy, Joe Ann would probably be in Singapore now. She had just been offered a job there when it happened."

Maureen, too, would have been in the United States by now, working as a computer programmer in New Jersey, De Leon said.

The family owns a nursery in Nueva Ecija and is financially secure.

But it was not so when Maureen was growing up, the mother said. "Mau used to make do with so little when she went to school. If only she got to have herself or to her mother's bit longer, I would be happy."

Meant to be together

At her home in Malabon, Yolanda said she and her two new friends shared their pain through pictures and stories of their children.

"We kept on bumping into each other while we were processing our children's papers, and we started talking and seeing each other," she said. "We may not have seen each other for a weekend. It seemed unfair, but the need to be together was there."

Yolanda said among the offers of assistance by Ayala Land Inc., the mall owner and operator, was for the grieving families to see a therapist.

"We all declined. Dr. therapist and we worked through our sorrows," Yolanda said.

She said their conversations usually began with memories of the children and continued with questions on the tragedy and what could they could have to get justice.

"We have moved on, but there are moments when the question 'why' persists," she said.

Whenever the three women get together, the occasion is always an emotional.

"We end up crying together no matter how light our feelings before we meet, because we always talk about our loss. We all miss our children," Yolanda said.

They say to help one another by just being there—even for accidental meetups—"like the way our children were there for each other," she said.

GRIEVING mothers (from left) Marcedes de Leon, parents of Gracia and Evelaida Vidanes find solace in each another as they continue to cope with the loss of their children who died in the Glorietta 2 mall explosion on Dec. 11, 2007. JOEY GOSIENGFIAO

A LIFE-SIZE representation of a picture of ITT graduate Maureen de Leon, who died in the explosion at the Glorietta 2 mall a year ago. INQUIRER

ZENAIDA Vidanes presents a small shrine in the living room of her Malabon home for her son Nikko Cansa, who would have turned 23 when he died in the explosion at the Glorietta 2 mall a year ago. INQUIRER

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Luli's mom keeps mum on wedding

From page A1

radio because she is a very private person.

After signing the Credit Information System Law in Malacañang yesterday, the President engaged heads of banks and financial institutions in a lively banter before she was pulled aside by creditor for some pointers-taking.

While walking out of the Rizal Hall, the President was asked by some reporters to confirm the wedding of her only daughter and accountant child. She merely smiled and walked on.

'I don't know'

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he learned about the report on TV and was inclined to believe it. He, however, could not confirm it.

"I can't confirm it because I have not spoken with the President...I'm not in a position [to confirm it]. I read it (believe that)," Ermita said in an interview.

Later, when he was pressed to reveal more by inquirers, he said: "I don't know really. I also read about it. I don't have any idea."

Secretary Gorgi Semenda, Presidential Management Staff chief, also said: "I don't know anything about it."

Private person

Quoting sources, ABS-CBN News reported online that Luli, the second of the President's three children, is set to tie the knot with young Borras on Jan. 9, 2009 in Bohol province.

Luli, 37, neither confirmed nor denied the report. "I never talk about my personal life. My personal life has never been open to media and that doesn't change," she told ABS-CBN in a text mail.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, one of the authors of the Credit Information System Law who showed up at the signing of the law, said he congratulated the presidential daughter via text message.

"She never texted back," he told some reporters. "She never confirmed or denied."

Luli is a passionate scuba diver and dedicated environmentalist.

She is perhaps the most tech-savvy among the three Arroyo children and worked as director of operations for the nongovernmental organization Pamalakaya for Information Technology, Education and Development (PhilIDEA). PhilIDEA's objective is to increase IT awareness and contribute to the effort to prepare Philippine society for the Information Age.

In 2000, she passed the foreign service examinations but decided not to pursue a diplomatic career because her mother would not sign her appointment papers for fear of being accused of nepotism.

Luli studied high school at Assumption and college at the Ateneo de Manila. She worked for a year with Ayala Land and then took up law studies in Georgetown University.

Business and culinary arts

According to ABS-CBN, Borras is the son of lawyers Antonio Borras and a nephew of the Ateneo Law School dean emeritus and constitutional law expert and Inquirer columnist Fr. Joaquin Bernas.

According to his profile on linkedin.com, Borras is former director at Ayala Properties Inc., former senior managing director at Boar Stearns Int'l Ltd. and former managing director at Bankers Trust Co.

He took a professional culinary course at the Le Scuola Culinari Gordon Bleu Firenze in Italy from 2002 to 2003. He finished his MBA at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business Administration where he studied from 1984 to 1987 and attended the Darden School Scholarship. He holds a master's degree in History and East Asian Studies also at the University of Virginia where he studied from 1984 to 1986.

He graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics degree in 1982.

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Gardenia

GMA hits critics over Bolante ...

From page A1

tical intrigues and grandstanding. Reminding reformers would our concerns as... the other side.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Ms Arroyo's remarks were "just a reminder to... some we might call critics."

"We're hoping that it will be helpful for all of us in our hectic moves and maneuvers that will help alleviate the sufferings of our people," Ermita said.

Bolante, who is suspected of engineering the purported diversion of farmers' fertilizer funds to the Arroyo's campaign kitty in the run-up to the May 2004 presidential election, arrived in Manila late Tuesday after two years of fighting deportation in a US country jail.

He was arrested by a team sent by the Philippine migrant in 2006 but was released off from the airport to St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City, where he remains confined.

Senate senators, including Panfilo Lacson, are seeking the reopening of the inquiry into the fund scandal.

But Sen. Edgardo Angara, current chair of the Senate agriculture committee, is standing by his position that the Office of the Ombudsman should now handle the investigation of Bolante's case.

"We were through the inquiry. We have heard him [Bolante], and convicted him. We're finished with him. So the next step is the court of justice, the Ombudsman," Angara said in separate yesterday.

'Double standard'

The senator said that in the Office of the Ombudsman, Bolante could be assisted by a lawyer, unlike in the Senate.

"Besides, in the Ombudsman, for the prosecution of the accused, we follow rules of evidence," he said.

But Sen. Francis Escudero sees a "double standard" in the way the Senate is treating Bolante.

On the phone with the Inquirer, Escudero said his colleagues did not pursue when the Senate committee on foreign relations committed "premature" inquiries in looking into the PEA-Amari "contingency" fund for top police officials who attended the Leonpel General Assembly in Bacolod early in October.

"But now they are excusing Bolante [absence] when talking of *Joc Joc*," he said. "Double standard is apparent."

Escudero said the committee chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago followed "questionable procedure" in conducting the Gen. 23 investigation on the so-called "mere grounds."

He pointed out that Santiago called a hearing while the Senate was on recess and although "nothing was referred" to her committee, and that she issued an arrest warrant on retired police commodore Eliseo de la Paz "without the concurrence of the majority."

But when it comes to Bolante, he said, "the other senators say 'let's wait for the Supreme Court to rule on the contempt'" issued on De la Paz, who had snubbed the inquiry.

Escudero also said he could not understand the behavior of some of his colleagues during the June hearing presided over by Santiago.

"They were very angry, quarreling with and even shouting [at the police brass] when the issue of unlawful arrest only P5 million. But in *Joc Joc*'s case, it's 700 times more than that amount," said the senator, who chairs the committee on justice and human rights and on ways and means.

"I hope they are showing anger 100 times over. But it seems that they view *Joc Joc* differently from De la Paz," he said.

Sick or acting?

Escudero made the remarks when asked about the resistance panel by Senators Juan... and Juan Miguel Zubiri to the proposed reopening of the Senate inquiry into the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

He said he became sore struggling on feet in answering Bolante's security.

He also added his voice to the call of certain senators for Senate President Manuel Villar to send the chamber's own doctors to St. Luke's to look into the actual state of Bolante's health.

"I'm calling on the Senate doctors to check on him if indeed he's really sick, or he's just acting. I hope his BP [blood pressure] is not 110 overacting," Escudero quipped.

Villar's office said yesterday that the Senate president had already issued the necessary instruction.

"There's an instruction for the doctors to personally visit Bolante. But I think they are just waiting for the completion of medical tests," said a member of Villar's staff who asked not to be named for lack of authority to make any announcement.

The other day, Dr. Romeo Hurtado, Bolante's attending physician, said his patient was "stable" and could walk around but needed "further examination."

Youth rally

Some 15 members of militant youth organizations were the lastest to hold a 30-minute demonstration on a portion of E. Rodriguez Avenue leading to St. Luke's.

"Lumo ga in-hell," members of the League of Filipino Students (LFS) and of Anakbayan chanted while riding on Bolante to spill the beans on the fertilizer fund mess.

The rally lifted the spirits of the few supporters who had stayed on to monitor Bolante's state of health. Given the hospital management apparent to have exposed the media's waiting lowered and cut the area allotted for reporters by at least a quarter.)

The demonstrators numbered at around 1 p.m., holding aloft a thick replica of a shell. They said the shell would hasten Bolante arrest to be tried for the trial on the fertilizer fund scam.

LFS national chair Vencer Crisostomo said the scare was "Bolante's desperate to the close."

Crisostomo also urged the management of St. Luke's not to allow Bolante's continued stay. With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal

BIDDING FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF PRESENTATION EQUIPMENT
AT BARRETTO HALL
HDC Building 7 M Timbuctoo St., Sikatuna Village, Makati City
(Reference: DAC08-05-060)

TO ALL PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS:

Please be advised of the following bidding schedule:

	ACTIVITY	DATE/TIME	VENUE
1	Posting of Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid, and Issuance of Bidding Documents	October 23, 2008 to November 7, 2008 10:00 AM October 24-31, 2008	Newspaper of General Nationwide Circulation HDC Website/Bulletin Boards PHILGEPS Website Conspicuous Places
2	Issuance of Bid Documents	October 27 to November 3, 2008	TF10GC Building
3	Pre-Bid Conference and Site Inspection	November 3, 2008 2:00 PM	Bids and Awards Committee Barrette Hall, HDC Building
4	Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid	November 13, 2008 12:00 PM	BAC Secretariat TF10GC Building
5	Opening of Eligibility Envelope and Eligibility Check Opening of Technical Envelope and Preliminary Examination of Bids Opening of Financial Envelopes	November 13, 2008 2:00 PM after Pig. Check	BAC/ TWG TF10GC Bldg.
6	Bid Evaluation and Ranking	November 20, 2008	BAC/TWG "F 10C Building
7	Post Qualification	November 21, 2008	BAC/ TWG TF10GC Building
8	Approval of Resolution / Issuance of Notice of Award	November 25, 2008	Thru Fax, mail or delivery to Bidders
9	Contract Preparation and Signing; Approval of Contract	November 26, 2008	BAC, PTHGC Building
10	Issuance of Notice to Proceed	November 27, 2008	Thru Fax, mail or delivery to Bidders

ADM SUTURNINO M. MEJIA
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

SECURITY SERVICES C/Y 2009

58 Security Personnel Requirements of TESDA Complex and TESDA-Marikina Campus

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) through the National Government Budget intends to apply the sum of Php 1,000,000 being the total Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for the provision of security services. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

TESDA now invites qualified firms from eligible Bidders for the Security requirements of TESDA. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Invitation to Bidders (ITB).

Bidding will be conducted through public bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part 5 (IRR-5) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to prequalified contractors, unless allowed under the exceptions to prequalification in Section 23 of the IRR-5, as mentioned in Section 5(b) of R.A. 9184. Only Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships or partnerships or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as defined in Republic Act No. 7042, as amended by R.A. 8179, may be eligible to participate in the aforementioned bidding. Foreign bidders may be allowed to participate pursuant to Section 23.4.2 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184, provided that pertinent international agreements or obligations are complied with.

Prospective bidders may obtain further information from the PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY DIVISION, 3rd Flr., TESDA Administration Building and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the amount of Php 500.00. The method of payment will be in the form of cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

It is the will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on November 12, 2008, 1:00 PM at DTI Conference Room, Learning Center, Second Floor, TESDA Administration Building.

Bids, and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 1:00 PM on November 19, 2008. All Bids must be accompanied by a bid security in any of the following form and amount:

- Cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit equivalent to 2% of the ABC; or
- Bank Guarantee equivalent to 2% of the ABC; or
- Surety Bond equivalent to 5% of the ABC; or
- Foreign government guarantee equivalent to 100% of the ABC.

Late/late bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be held on November 24, 2008, 2:00 PM at DTI Conference Room, Learning Center, Second Floor, TESDA Administration Building. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

TESDA reserves the rights to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

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INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (INEC) through the ACCREDITATION and BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE (BAC) invites all interested suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of:

Item	Quantity	Unit	Material Description
1	1	pcs.	WALL CALENDAR (18" x 26" Poster Size) Quezon

Eligibility and bid forms may be secured at the BAC Secretariat on **November 5, 2008** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) to the INEC Cashier.

In complying the invitation, the interested bidder is required to have in compliance the – Warranty and evaluation, methodology criteria bids and dry warranty may right to cash any nonconforming order, issuance of certificate to prevent, maintain or promote INEC on the conduct of the bidding negotiation award and implementation.

(Sgd.) ENGR. JHOMMEIGH E. CASTILLO
Chairman
Bids & Awards Committee

Approved by:

(Sgd.) RENATO A. BAJARITO, PEE
INC General Manager

Rainy day today ...

From page A1

Nathaniel Cruz, weather branch chief of Pagasa, said the location that an tropical cyclone is expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility this weekend.

However, an intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ) is affecting parts of Mindoro, Masbate, Romblon, Leyte, Visayas and Mindanao. "It would be wise to bring raincoats and umbrellas today," he said.

According to Pagasa's website, the ITCZ is expected to persist for the next three days over Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, bringing scattered to widespread rains showers and thunderstorms.

Yesterday, Metro Manila experienced cloudy skies with light showers just as people started swapping to the ornaments to spruce up the graves of their departed loved ones.

Survey in Visayas

Cruz said there could be clouds from the west spell in Visayas and Mindanao today.

Tomorrow, Pagasa said it expects the formation of a low pressure area on the eastern part of Visayas that could bring frequent rains. Luzon could have some good weather with passing light showers mostly on the western side.

"There is a possibility of rain," Cruz said.

Temperatures will range between 22 degrees and 32 degrees centigrade today. The waters in Manila Bay will be slight to moderate.

Operation Manhunt

Meanwhile, teacher teams of the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) will begin its campaign with millions converging All Saints' Day hoping to arrest some of the country's most wanted.

"This is a good time for a manhunt. Printed persons come out of hiding," Supt. Raquel Barrera, chief of the PNP CIDG National Capital Region, said yesterday.

Barrera said crime suspects traditionally let their guard down on holidays like today and Christmas to be with their families which gives the police an "opportune time" to catch them.

"Even the most wanted criminals go home to their provinces to honor their dead loved ones," Barrera said, noting that special police units had made a number of arrests on Nov. 1 and during the Christmas holidays.

They can't hide

Without disclosing numbers, he said several arrest teams would be going around the country's cemeteries today visiting grave sites based on the crime suspects' ties to those that they would mess up and fight a cradle.

"We respect the dead, but we do not respect criminals. They can run but they can't hide forever," Barrera said.

Among the country's most wanted are: Baldwin Bantolinao suspect Jose Maria Sarmiento Pacifico, a suspect in the death of Albert Gutierrez; Jaybee Sebastian and other Hapilon and Redullah Sahiron, alleged leaders of the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf Group.

There is a P5-million reward for the arrest of each of the suspects.

PNP on full alert

Arresting teams will be among thousands of police officers deployed around cemeteries today as the PNP has been placed on full alert to ensure the safety expected to visit their departed loved ones through the weekend.

In Metro Manila alone, at least 3,000 police officers will be deployed in public and private cemeteries, prominent among them the Manila North Cemetery in Manila and the Manila South Cemetery in Makati City.

PNP chief Jesus Verzosa yesterday ordered regional police directors to convene commander's forum going to and coming from the provinces.

"Maximize visible at all times using transit teams, transport commando, public safety companies and civil or public places to establish police presence in these areas," Verzosa told his regional chiefs.

For emergencies, those visiting cemeteries this weekend may count on the PNP's Police Assistance Centers, which will be manned by police officers, local government officials, civilian volunteers and communication groups and recovery units.

Limit use of appliances

The Manila Electric Co. has warned the public against bringing too many appliances to cemeteries over the weekend as they may cause power outages.

"We would discourage people to bring their cool-electrical appliances, such as televisions, radio, electric fans, coffee makers, water heaters and the like. Plugging in these personal appliances may cause the cemeteries' electrical system to overload, leading to power outages," Meralco vice president for corporate communications Eipi Cona said yesterday in a statement.

He said Meralco advised cemetery administrators to lighten their security to prevent any overloading from happening and to thoroughly check their electrical installations making sure they would be ready to handle the influx of people.

Circuit breakers and switch boxes should be in proper working order, he said, to prevent accidents that would cause the loss of lives and property.

Choose battery-operated

For people who would still bring personal appliances to cemeteries, Cona made it clear that Meralco would not release any form of electricity pilferage, such as tapping appliances directly to the power lines's lines and facilities. With reports from Abigail L. Hu and Volume C. Tavalos Jr.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, November 1, 2008
SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS
All Saints

1st Reading: Rev 7:2-4, 9-14
Responsorial Psalm: Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
Gospel: Mt 5:1-12a

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, he sat down and his disciples gathered around him. Then he spoke and he gave to us and to them:

"Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, they shall possess the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

Blessed are those with a pure heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are those who work for peace, they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for the cause of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you, when people insult you and persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad [with], for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who lived before you."

Commentary

Today we celebrate the vision called today a saint way. Thinking of the beautiful stained glass windows in her parish church, she responded, "It was a common where the light shines through." "How simple, yet how profound her response!

Jesus proposes a way of life based upon the simplicity of the Beatitudes and the law more on the Mount. If we are to be holy, if we are to be saints we must allow the light to permeate everything that we do and say. Heaven will not fall to us by happiness and peace, and so will the world. Not easier to hope.

Fire hits Army ammo dump in M'nao

COMBAO CITY—RESIDENTS NEAR military headquarters in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Shariff Kabunsuan, were awakened by a series of explosions coming out of the camp in dawn yesterday.

The 1st Army explained that the explosions were triggered by a fire that broke out in a building that was being used to store artillery shells.

No one was reported injured in the 4:30-a.m. fire and the subsequent explosions that lasted for about 20 minutes.

But Col. Julieto Anito, spokesperson of the 6th Infantry Division, already feared then that the fire could have been caused by sabotage. He said it was still being investigated.

The explosions could be heard in this city, which is about eight kilometers from the military camp. "It's like we have four bombs," a soldier in the camp told the Inquirer.

The fire was contained about two hours later and did not cause any substantial losses as it only affected an ammo dump site, said Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City.

Cabangbang said the burned bullets only contained defective artillery shells and bullets for small firearms, which had been slated for disposal.

"No one was injured. The warehouse itself is surrounded by hardcarpet and abaca plantations, which helped in containing the explosions," Cabangbang said.

He said investigators are now looking at the possibility that the fire may have been caused by faulty electrical wiring system. "Definitely it is not sabotage," he added.

But Anito said the building was not wired for electricity as it was not possible that faulty electrical wiring could have triggered the blaze.

He said some of the unused shells or explosives may have been set off by a still undetermined cause. "The ammunition lacking keys does not are sensitive to crash, heat and friction."

Maj. Gen. Raymundo Ferrey, chief of the 6th Infantry Division, believes it was an accident. He said most of the unused shells had phosphorous or gun powder which is highly flammable and can ignite on minor friction.*Jeofrey Maiden, Edwin Fernandez and Allan Nawal, Inquirer Mindanao*

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Gov't tightens controls on toy importations

IT WILL NOW BE HARDER TO import toys and distribute them to the local markets.

This surfaced after the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Health signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) enhancing toy importation to ensure regulations.

Customs chief Napoleon Morales said the two agencies reached an agreement for stricter controls especially after imported toys from China were revealed early this year to have lead content.

He said the agreement was also in anticipation of the influx of imported plastic toys for the holiday season.

The DOH, through the Bureau of Health Devices and Technology (BHDT), will enforce the appropriate rules, Morales said, seeks to enforce compliance of importers to guidelines covering such importations.

Under the agreement, the BHDT, which is tasked to monitor and test the products coming into the country, will give the Customs a list of products already tested and declared safe for public sale.

It will also submit a list of companies cleared with a certificate of conformity or clearance for unsubmitted release, and recommend the issuance of warrant of seizure and detention for offending shipments.

The BOC, for its part, will hold the shipments' release until such time that the importers comply with the requirements of the DOH. Customs officials are also required to give BHDT a list of accredited importers.

Imported toys were previously classified as regular importations, but since the issues on excessive chemical content became a global concern early this year, the two governments agencies deemed it prudent to set more stringent measures for its importation, Morales said.

The BOC is currently monitoring the entry of imported dolls and plastic toys from China, after it was reported early this year that Chinese toy manufacturers exported toys with high lead content. *Kristine L. Alave*

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Top British security adviser due

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Gordon Brown's top security adviser is to visit the troubled southern Philippines next week to meet government officials and Muslim separatist rebels, officials said Friday.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, who advises Brown on intelligence and security matters, is to arrive in Manila on Monday for a two-day visit, the British Embassy said.

He will meet President Arroyo's cabinet ministers and members of the security establishment before flying to Mindanao for talks with leaders of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the embassy said.

Hanggins said: that's his experience as the key mover behind the 1998 Good Friday Agreement establishing peace sharing in Northern Ireland, ending 30 years of bloodshed.

The MILF's chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal embraced Donaldson's trip, which he said indicated the "interest of national community in Mindanao."

He said the chances of resuming peace talks with the Arroyo government were "very remote," adding the "government has practically abandoned the peace process." *AFP*

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PROCUREMENT OF FOLLOWING

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
NOTICE

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
ARMM REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
Invitation for Bids

ISSN 0116-2042 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Vol. 2196, 359

OPINION

Death and remembrance

EDITORIAL

IN THE CATHOLIC CALENDAR, THE DAY TO PRAY for the souls in Purgatory is on Nov. 1, which is All Saints' Day, the feast celebrating the souls who have gone to heaven. It is Nov. 2, All Souls' Day, or Nov. 3 when Nov. 2 falls on a Sunday or a special feast. This year, All Souls' Day falls on a Sunday, so by the Church calendar it should be observed on Nov. 3.

But that matters little to Filipinos. For many years now, most of us, especially those in urban centers, commemorate the day of the dead on Nov. 1. In fact, in the past, the government would declare Nov. 1, or the workday before or after it, a non-working holiday to allow Filipinos more time to honor their dear departed. This year there was no such declaration, but the "celebration" goes on nonetheless.

As a yearly event, the practice of praying for the dead was observed not always on Nov. 2. Neither was it a Church-wide practice. Based on various accounts, it seems that the practice started in Benedictine monasteries way back in the ninth or tenth century. And it was observed either on the day after the feast of the Pentecost, or on Pentecost itself, with a special Mass for the departed members of their community.

This practice soon spread to other congregations, then to different dioceses, but there was no uniform date for its observance. In Spain, for example, there was a time when it was done on the Saturday before the Sexagesima (eighth Sunday before Easter). In Germany, it was on Oct. 1, and in Milan, Italy, on Oct. 15.

The first to observe All Souls' Day on Nov. 2 were the Benedictine monks of the Abbey of Cluny (in France)—in the 11th century—under the leadership of St. Odilo, their abbot. This habit may be hardly known these days, but he is largely credited by the Church for its decision to make All Souls' Day a "universal festival." But it was not until the 13th century that "Nov. 2 as the feast of the departed members of the entire Church."

Some say that this practice of praying for the dead was taken from Judaism. Others trace its origin to a pagan festival for the dead. Sir Filipinos, the practice may seem like a vestige of our pre-Hispanic ancestors' belief in ancestor spirits, which included those of dead relatives. But there is much evidence in the New Testament and Christian literature that praying for the souls of the departed was not unusual among early Christians.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, All Souls' Day is based on the belief that the souls of the dead, even if already forgiven of the mortal sins they committed during their stay on earth, "were not perfectly cleansed from venial sins, or have not fully atoned for past transgressions." And so, "they are delivered from the Apostolic Vision." In this state, they are confined to Purgatory. Only when totally purified can they enter heaven. "[T]he faithful on earth," the Encyclopedia goes on, "can help them by prayers, [almsgiving] and especially by the sacrifice of the Mass."

There is no question that among Filipinos, there's a lot of praying for our dead: novena for a loved one right after his/her death or burial; Mass before the burial; and Mass and/or pasalamat on the 40th day after death; novena leading to every death anniversary; Mass and pasalamat on the death anniversary, and for some, every time they dream of a dead friend or relative.

It would seem, therefore, that we have no need of a special day to pray for the dead. Rather, it would seem that we need such a day to show our dead, in a special way, that they are still remembered and loved. And we have chosen All Saints' Day for that special demonstration.

In preparation for this day, we have spruced up the tombs of our dead, by cleaning the surroundings of weeds and repainting them. Today, finally in vino, we visit our dead at their gravesites. We bring them flowers, light a candle on their tombs, pray for their souls, and have a priest or lay minister bless them. Then we tarry a little longer to give them company.

The dead, Marcel Proust once wrote, "remain hatched in a sort of aura of life which bears no relation to true immortality but through which they continue to occupy our thoughts in the same way as when they were alive." This seems to be especially true of us.

In remembrance we use dirt, and everyone can be a saint.

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Facing death with poetry

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

AS A YOUNG BOY GROWING UP IN THE provinces, I used to go to the cemetery at this time of the year, not to visit the dead, but to fly kites. There, on top of the blocks of tombs that housed the dead, I would set my frail paper kites against the chilly November wind. In this manner, I grew up thinking of cemeteries not as grim graveyards for those who have gone but as pulsating playgrounds for the young.

I think this is very Filipino. We take time to remember the dead, but death itself holds little meaning for us as a terminal point. On All Saints' Day (which is days or, if you're a Seventh Day Adventist, even a week before All Souls' Day, the next day, which is really their day in the Christian calendar), we visit the dead as if they have come back precisely to commune with us. We gather at families before their graves, bringing food, flowers, candles, and good cheer. We reminisce about the times when they were among us. We thank them for their love and what they have done for us. We ask for their forgiveness and continuing guidance. But, though we may know that where they are is where we ourselves are going, the thought fails to dismay us. We seldom, if at all, think of our own death, and of what it may mean for the ones we should leave.

In Iloilo, Hungaya, where I grew up, I vividly remember the dictum inscribed on the portal of the cemetery: "Sica ngani, ica bucas" (roughly translated: "We today, you tomorrow"). I used to think it was a cute joke, meant to provoke laughter rather than contemplation. Only much later in life, long after I had stopped flying kites, did I realize the profundity of this little message. Perhaps I might have lived differently if I had paid more heed to it then; I don't know. Poets and philosophers have rendered the message in other ways, but its meaning is the same: no one lives forever. There is no escape from death; only a postponement that ends where it already is.

In the months just before he died from an inoperable cancer of the pancreas, my friend, the philosopher Rolland Borja was asked whether he had found his thoughts slowly turning towards religion. Borja, an agnostic, emphasized by omitting the "a" in front of the word, replied: "Neither the philosophy I had written nor that which I had read seemed to have any particular bearing on my situation." Interestingly, he had found comfort in poetry instead. Four months, almost as if to prove, he would recite the following lines from Algernon Swinburne, the Victorian poet:

> We thank with brief thanksgiving
> Whatever gods may be
> That no life lives for ever;
> That dead men rise up never;
> That even the weariest river
> Winds somewhere safe to sea."

And from Walter Savage Landor:

> 'Mature I stand, and near to thinner, dry.
> I see that both hands before the fire of life,
> It wanes, and I am ready to depart."

There are no special truths in these "old dreams," as Borja calls them, that had not been more fully expressed in prose by philosophers like Heidegger (for, to be able to recite these verses a lot to him during particular moments of his life. "I would have lived more fully if I had been able to recite all more old dreams... just as I would have from those more-lost friends. Cadences with richer resolutions are more fully human—further removed from the beasts—than those with poorer ones; individual men and women are more fully human when their memories are amply stocked with verse."

I often visit the graves of my parents, usually for no special reason. In the past, I would find myself mumbling prayers I had learned as a child, and telling them what I have been up to. Later in life, I would simply gaze at the dates of their deaths, wondering how much time I have before I join them, and what else I need to do to complete my life.

* * *

Comments to public.lives@gmail.com

Why Obama will win it

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

NEW YORK CITY—FROM WHERE I SIT, THE US election is over except for the shouting. No way can Barack Obama lose, the so-called Bradley Effect (where African-American candidates lose elections in spite of poll results showing a statistically significant lead) "no longer" exists (as explained by both Amanda Daniels and Ramon Farolan) notwithstanding. And even if the Bradley Effect should kick in, Obama may still squeak through, because his lead looks like a commanding one—if not to the traditional polls, at least in the polls in the "battleground" states.

Of course, it was almost a given that the Democrats would win the White House this year, the financial crisis and the US economic contraction being only the final nails hammered into the Republican coffin. After all, political science research findings say the economy matters: incumbents (whether individuals or party) tend to get reelected when the economy is doing well, and tend to be defeated when the economy is doing poorly, with the voters' perceptions of how the economy is doing, rather than on what is actually happening, as the important consideration.

Please take note that saying that the economy matters is not the same as saying it is the sole factor driving voter behavior. Nor is the Obama-McCain fight, two other very important factors have also worked in Obama's favor: the media, and campaign finance. With regard to the former, (23 analysts (every aspect of the US election campaign is being analyzed practically to death, or so it seems to me as I channel-surf) have found that negative media reports on McCain outnumber negative media reports on Obama two-to-one. Add to that the Gore Hospital media ploy on important exit polls in election campaigns, and in the US case, as in mine, their biases are evident—the latest playing examples being Fox (for McCain), and CBS (for Obama).

With regard to campaign finance, it turns out that Obama has at least a more than two-to-one cash advantage over McCain. (A National Public Radio (NPR) report, using the Federal Elections Commission, states that through August, Obama raised $428 million to McCain's $190 million. (Obama also outspent Hillary Clinton by about the same ratio, remember?) What's more, after August, McCain, having chosen to apply for public funding, while Obama having chosen not to ("what's in a name?: the Democrats usually apply for public funding, while the Republicans don't—it's an ideology thing, and Democrats being traditionally pro-labor, don't have as much financial support as the Republicans, who are pro-business), McCain's spending was thereafter limited to $84 million, while Obama was responsible for the (impossible for others) spending the $149 million, with more funds pouring in for October. With that kind of cash advantage, it is no wonder that Obama's campaign was able to fund 30-minute "infomercials" on prime time over the major channels earlier this week, as well as on the Internet. And we all know how important those ads were for.

In other words, while McCain may have the media in his favor, Obama has the media, the money, and the moribund economy in his (maybe means, too). It is hard to believe that enemies can trump all that, which is why I make this fearless forecast: in any case, the master will be with us by then. And I sincerely hope that some lunatic doesn't take it upon himself to derail the train.

But it is not just the outcome of the US election campaign that is of interest. The process itself is fascinating. And having a front seat, as it were, in the month coming up to the election, as well as the history-in-watch TV and surf the Net, I can see similarities as well as differences between them and us.

The similarities are evident from the above: the important role that media and money play in influencing the election results. To this can be added the influence of media personalities (Oprah Winfrey is to Obama what Judy Ann Santos was to Jamby Madrigal) on voters' decisions, and the importance of the ground organization, in general, and the proper registration and counting of votes, in particular.

But the differences are also many. For starters, in the case of media personalities, Oprah wasn't paid by Obama to support him, it was the other way around; Oprah has put her money where her mouth is. As far as Obama is concerned, a second difference is that the economy matters in all elections, which does not seem to be the case here. Moreover, assertions by candidates on economic as well as on other campaign issues are independently checked for adherence by the media to the "facts" before or as part of their coverage, whereas here we have a tendency to take these assertions at face value, and correct press releases as new or news items. In short, the United States has better quality coverage.

Last but not least is the use of negative campaign ads in the United States, where the opponent's shortcomings are magnified (as opposed to positive ads, where the candidate's own qualifications are emphasized). This type of advertisements are not allowed in the Philippines, maybe because the best of the ads may not be a good sport. (People here have been killed for less). While there are drawbacks to this type of campaigning (in politics, there are also advantages (differences between candidates are highlighted) to negative ads. Perhaps we should try them.

Obama very close to victory

BY MY ELECTION RACE, ANYWHERE IN THE world, I naturally root for the success, not of any particular candidate or party, but of opinion polling as a scientific profession playing a key role in the democratic process.

In the case of the United States in particular, the work of the pollsters points clearly to victory for Barack Obama and the Democratic party in Tuesday's presidential election.

By my eyeballing of the statewide polls, the following are safely Democratic: California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. These have a total of 264 electoral votes (EVs), with 270 needed to win.

I include Pennsylvania, since it looks like Obama has already won the battle there. He has big leads of +13 in the Morning Call/Muhlenberg College poll of Oct. 24-28 (sample of 500 likely or likely voters, with a 4-percent margin of error or MOE); +14 from Quinnipiac College/Bill of Oct. 26-27 (733 LVs, 4 MOE), +12 from AP-GfK Poll by Oct. 27 (sample of 1,000 LVs and RVs) and +11 from Franklin & Marshall College Poll of Oct. 22-26 (1,264 LVs, 2.7 MOE), and +12 from Franklin & Marshall College/Philadelphia Daily News/WGAL-TV etc. of Oct. 21-26 (790 LVs, 3.5 MOE). Sample size and MOE are inversely related, by a standard formula.

The following, with a total of 74 EVs, are leaning Democrat: Colorado (9 EVs), Florida (27), Nevada (5), Ohio (20), and Virginia (13). Winning any one, except Nevada, would be conclusive.

The easiest of the leaning states to win seems to be Virginia, where Obama is +8 (SurveyUSA of Oct. 27-29, 563 LVs, 4

Socially conscious jeep driver

I WAS ON A PASSENGER JEEP-ney (with plate number PHL 338) plying the Cubao-Antipolo City Hall route. The driver was calling on boat students at Cubaocan Old High School to get into his jeepney. The students chorally told the driver that they didn't have money. The driver insisted: "OK, P5 na lang for each of you," he said in Tagalog.

Still the students refused. "We're already late, kuya (brother)," they pleaded. Another teenager interrupted: Ay! Then they sneered, "Bahala sakyo na lang." The driver nodded, and the students thanked him, "Kuya maraming salamat."

I didn't get the driver's name but his kindness meant a lot to the poor students. When I got off the jeepney, I told the driver, "Bro, proud ka, P7 na lang, kulang lang ang pasahe."

The driver scratched his head and jokingly said "Sana ngayong araw-araw ngayon kulang ang pamasahe sa mga bata para dumami sa pamasahe ang kita."

—SERGIO C. VALENCIA,
building 34, Room 933,
Bagong Lipunan Condominium,
Tagaig City 1630

2008 World Food Day passes by foodless Filipinos

THE FARMERS are the ones who can't get enough income and food. RAFAEL

OCC 16 OF EVERY YEAR IS World Food Day. Ironically, what people around the world got to observe this year was World Foodless Day. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) itself, the United Nation's food body, there are 923 million undernourished people in the world today, even as there are 82 low-income, food-deficit countries (countries whose percapita income and net food trade position are below the thresholds set by the World Bank), among them the Philippines.

In the Philippines today, about 75.32 percent of Filipino families can hardly afford to buy enough food, an 18.06 increase over this year based on the nationwide survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute shows that this 3-food consumption has been decreasing, this explains the increase in the number of underweight and undernourished.

Prices of food and other basic commodities have been increasing dramatically as 3.4 percent since December 2007, while people's incomes hardly cope with inflation. From P125 to P200 is the usual cost of wage hikes, the adjusted daily minimum wage is still not enough to cover the daily cost of living. The same DOLE study reported that 71 percent of Filipinos were not receiving enough to meet their families' basic needs. The food consumption gap seemed to show existing low (e.g., seafood, bonuses, Bolsonara and the ocean, people) became more inadequate.

The lack of food security can be traced to the very start of the agricultural sector.

Landlessness remains a problem. 78 percent of farmers do not own land. The government's signature reform program has only brought them deeper into poverty and misery.

Agricultural production largely remains backward. The different government support to agriculture was aggravated by the fertilizer and seed scams.

So they have been doing since the Marcos regime (through Masagana 99 and Green Revolution), transnational agrochemical corporations continue to take in huge profits from the already suffering farmers through the government's productivity programs. The agrodiesel fertilizers and pesticides they have been promoting have destroyed the fertility of agricultural lands, which have become dependent on such farm inputs.

Globalization has only wrought havoc on the farming sector. Large tracts of land have been taken over to cultivate cash crops, while crops of land have been replaced with export products like tea flowers, vegetables and fruits for the foreign markets. The country has been pushed to import rice whether or not there is a rice shortage and, since 2003, among poor nations that can big net rice importers.

The country can come out of "foodless days" only if it sets out from the agricultural sector's backwardness and implements a genuine land reform program that includes subsidy and other agricultural support truly beneficial to the nation's food producers (the farmers) and the Filipino people.

—ESTELITA MORAIN,
Council for Health and
Development (CHD),
chdmanresort@yahoo.com

Most corrupt tag under GMA's rule

THIS IS IN REACTION TO SOLON ariosto "Uncontrolled corruption," Inquirer, 10/22/08)

There was a time when we Filipinos were proud to say "I am a Filipino." We were proud of our heroes, those especially after the 1986 People Power uprising—where Filipinos (men, women and children) of all ages and from all walks of life, armed only with flowers, food, water and rosaries bravely faced tanks and phalanxes of soldiers in full battle gear to bring down a dictator. We Filipinos at home and abroad were overjoyed for being Filipinos then.

But after only a few years, it turns out that the corrupt and dictatorial government we ousted would be succeeded by a far more corrupt dictatorship that has factored so well from the mistakes of the past (hoped to avoid the latter's) flaws.

The imposition of the calibrated preemptive response (CPR) is proof of this. Sometime ago we read a statement of a former colonel of the Philippine National Metropolitan Command (Metrocom) that had they made efforts to prevent the merging of democratic forces coming from all fronts, Edsa 1 could not have succeeded.

The Pangasinan Supreme Court ruled that the CPR was unconstitutional, but the sinister brain of this government, led by pampered and his able officers in the military and the police, hung onto the citizenry's head like the sword of Damocles, ready to fall on anyone who would dare threaten to throw Gloria Macapagal down out of Malacañang.

Corruption in the highest echelons of government has become the order of the day. The recent loss Dreidemann is busy catching small fries but turns as much to nothing big fishes.

No wonder, the corrupt remain unpunished. Our symbolic corruption scandals have become commonplace in this country. No wonder, the Philippines has become the most corrupt country in this part of Asia and one of the most corrupt in the world, as Transparency International has been consistently confirming these past years.

For the Philippines to earn this notoriety under her rule, is life she was not ashamed to have world leaders the stench in but frequent junkets!

"Bangit" no say

—RAMON REFUGIA,
GeRi1@sprint.mail.com

Disregard Rolito Go's fake remorse

THIS IS IN REACTION TO JOSÉ Story's Oct. 14 column, specifically that portion lifted from an article published in the Manila Times where it was said that, I refer to the statements of Rolito Go's lawyer, Emmanuel Fernando. Says general: Fernando as saying that the shooting of Eldon Magnaye by Go was "unintended and accidental". that Go was "driving on his side of the road when Magnaye, coming in the opposite direction, suddenly swerved and blocked his path." Not true. Fernando's statement was an attempt to distort the truth to the convicted murderer's effort to gain freedom.

First of all, throughout Go's trial, we were one or board of the panels. So many have served to the background flesh, as one of his secondary lawyers, but is to true to, that he did not study carefully the facts of the case.

The evidence clearly showed that Go had just come out of Cardigan Restaurant's parking lot along Wilson Street and was going eastbound the one-way traffic lane of Wilson Street when he turned Eldon, that Go shot. Eldon just a few meters from the very complainant one-way street sign post. How could Fernando say that Go was on "his" side of the road?

Fernando also said "Magnaye alighted from his car and had the gall to waive bolito back as if he had the right of way." This is clearly another invented story. Throughout the whole trial, not a single eyewitness—and there were many among them the owner of a prominent food establishment, a chancellor, several people from all realms of life who saw the incident—testified that Eldon alighted from his car before Go shot him. How Go's own sister Julie to cubo, in an interview reported by the Inquirer last Oct. 8 that Eldon's car was hit by his brother's car(not did not testify to that effect. In fact, she swore under oath that she was with her brother at the scene of the crime that night and that no shooting were uncovered while they were there.

Go and his lawyers seem to think that such should take a back seat. At first, they totally denied Go's involvement in the crime. Failing to escape culpability, Go then tried to escape justice via pleas. And now, in a sudden turnaround, they claim remorse for Eldon's killing. With their new version of the story as Eldon's murder, Go and his lawyers are clearly challenging our sentence's intelligence. Obviously, the new story is not a sign of genuine and sincere remorse on Go's part. It is but another manifestation of the cold, calculating character of this criminal and his lawyers.

It is our stand that such long delayed and dearly self-serving "remorse" should never be given any credibility.

—MAGSAYSAY FORTE

Interview embarrassing to military

DANTE BENEVIDES (LETTERS, JULY 14) regulation the ABS-CBN interview of Bicol rebel leader Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo. With surprise because ABS-CBN was able to accomplish what the military has been trying desperately to do these past months...find Commander Bravo and his raging band of criminals. The network must feel mighty pleased and proud of itself for accomplishing such a feat.

But what the ABS-CBN management and its reporter didn't realize was that in their quest to score a "media coup," they also fell the WHLP's campaign to sow terror and allowed Commander Bravo, surrounded by men with high-powered guns, to deceive the people into believing that he and his men are still a force to reckon with.

Why the rumor ABS-CBN had cast upon veteran media ethics in the minds and allowed itself to be used by the WHLP propaganda machine to disparage government and encourage seditious behavior. ABS-CBN should be held liable for glorifying criminals like Commander Bravo. It should be made to understand the limits of journalistic freedom. In pursuit of higher ratings should and values then lose the direction the country begins.

—JUSTUS ALAVERIA,
jo.bee777@gmail.com

A strange, preferential treatment

WHY WAS JOCELYN "BOC-BOC" Bolante shocked in straight in a cell at the St. Luke's Hospital when many Filipinos have to line up and wait, or have to be treated first or in emergency ward, till a room becomes vacant? Is it because a top official of the hospital is a friend of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo?

The discrimination is outright revolting. Friends and relatives of Manny Pacman and Angelo King, like most Filipinos, get no preferential treatment from the hospital, yet men who are accused of robbing this country of billions of pesos are given VIP treatment.

—I. LAMMOGLIA,
johnny@yahoo.com

Press politicos to support impeach bid

LET'S GO ALL OUT IN SUPPORT of the impeachment bid against Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. This is the last time we can do something legal to get GMA off the presidency. Failure to do so during commencement gives credence against the Filipino people.

The previous impeachment complaints alluded to the same crimes but were thrown out by GMA's allies in the House of Representatives in favor of her continued grave crimes against the Filipino people.

This November, Congress will resume for its last session of the 14th Congress. It is expected that the impeachment complaint that charges GMA with culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, bribery, graft and corruption and other high crimes, as well as treason for her support of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) that the Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional.

My countrymen, call your representatives in Congress and your local officials, as well as your friends and relatives. Tell them to support the impeachment complaint now pending in the House of Representatives. Let us get together, unite and vigorously support the impeachment complaint. Let us not waste this opportunity to get rid of this grave who will follow to, so that we will not fall into the hands of bad government and, at last, a successor born into power.

—MAJ. BEN MORTIMER D. ARIT (Ret.),
bertantarat@yahoo.com

What would Jesus Christ do with controversial RH bill?

WHERE LIES JURISDICTION? HAS convicted of the crime of raping his 10-year-old daughter in April 1999 and meted out the supreme penalty of death under Republic Act 7659, commonly known as the Death Penalty Law. Lesa must of the Commission realized that death penalty is not in accordance with God's plan for men and society. Thus, on June 24, 2006, Congress passed Republic Act 9346 which prohibited the imposition of death penalty in the Philippines ever in heinous crimes.

Surprisingly, some of these legislators are now pushing for the passage of what is now popularly called the "Reproductive Health (RH) Bill" which would allow the use of contraceptives some of which, based on some medical tests, could cause abortion. As expected, a provision of the bill talks about "post abortion complications." This proves beyond doubt that the bill promotes abortion (for, otherwise, it would not have included the provision.

If the commissioners or lesser enacted methods introduced in the bill could cause abortion or could kill the unborn child, then how could these legislators easily forget their position against the supreme penalty of death penalty? In other words, who upon criminal deeds deserve to reap the gift of life, but does the author right to the innocent and unborn, unborn child or persons who used to life that God gave is manifest from passing and multiplying? for sure, it is not for us to interfere with the recipe of the Creator.

If we oppose the death penalty because of our spiritual belief that only God could take the life of anyone, then with more reason that we should oppose a law that puts at risk the life of an unborn child. If we believe that God has His own plans for affirming these criminals to exist, then, for sure, God has also His own divine plans for allowing a child to be conceived.

After all, what have we done as a nation and as a people for the past so many years to calm this "overpopulation" issue"? Have we run out of God-given talents and competence to solve this problem that we should now sacrifice the lives of innocent, unborn children because of our own failure or inventiveness in addressing this problem?

If we recognize "animal's rights" to the extent of having our pets "blessed" during the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, should not the unborn child be entitled to a higher degree of care and protection from all of us who have already received and named this gift of life?

The best way we must face to resolve this controversial issue is to ask ourselves: "What would Jesus do under the circumstances?" Being the wise Master of Life, would He condone the use of contraceptives as such birth control methods as a means to solve the alleged problem of "overpopulation" in our country?

Your answer is as good as mine.

God bless the Philippines!

—ESMERALDO E. ENCARNACION,
former commissioner,
Land Support of Our Good Parish,
Las Piñas City

Godmother-led syndicate rules Philippine gangland

IT'S HIGHLY HEARTENING TO watch the news and read the papers, as agriculture official divorced further funds for election purposes, a top election official is asked a deal to modernize elections with a bogus company and a president. Did candidates called an election commissioner during the canvassing of votes.

Let's not forget a US lobbyist/agent was smuggled out of Philippine jurisdiction; a convicted plunderer was pardoned, and an arrogant murderer was returned to Philippine soil during the presidency of yours.

Only in the Philippines today is looking like a very bad movie...except that it's real.

I suggest we drop all pretenses and just declare once and for all that we no longer deserve the name "Republika ng Pilipinas."

Our beautiful Philippines is looking more and more like a gangland. It's now home to the most successful mafia-like syndicate there is in any part of the world. Just like in the movies, the syndicate's bosses appear respectable, they go to church on Sundays, and have nice social intentions, clothes and cars. But here, unlike anywhere else, they also run our country.

Here they use laws you don't need or killed to breed daylight, especially if you (a) are an activist and (b) a journalist critical of government anomalies, or for no particular reason at all. Here they drive around in those big SUVs with tinted windows who will not hesitate to bully anyone who gets in their way.

Yes, they belong to The Family that rules the country. This Family is headed by a godmother, who is also the patron of contract killers, plunderers, murderers and abortion clinics. Human rights? Are you kidding? Those are considered those parts of the planet.

—ROBERT ALEXANDER,
theharlequin@yahoo.com

An epitaph for myself

LITTLE I KNOW, BEEN THINKING ... IF I WERE TO SECUMBER soon, how would my family, friends and associates who knew me up close describe me to strangers who have never met me but for some reason find themselves in my wake?

As they pore on a image conjured by the mediary's beautician from my best photograph, how could they ever recall how I looked... and how I talked and swam and ran and laughed and walked and made and made my hugs and all that that did the landscape of

my face—when I was 16, then 40, then 50, then 65 years old and on the day I breached my last? How would they ever describe how my voice—the person that I was?

Not that in the genuine scheme of things mortal or divine, it would matter at all. But God knows who I was and what I was, and how in the latter years of my mortality, I came to be ready to meet Him.

At the onset of this year while contemplating my life, I thought of the possible words for my own epitaph. I came up with that:

I resolved to live for others and sometimes I succeeded. I searched for God's countenance in the faces of those around me. Of those were days I did not see Him, It must have been because I looked the other way.

The years of my thoughts on that day urged me to this contemplative death like a marble flowing little streams, those words formed in my mind, begging to be penned:

On The Threshold of Death:
From here I go to where I hope to see God face to face.
May His radiance not blind me, for may I be standing in it.
I'll send you dreams to let you know I'm happy;
I'll fill your sleeping thoughts with visions of peace and joy.
I'll point for your reflection in a landscape of heaven's array
And remind you that there on Earth you can have your Heaven too.

The answers to my questions encompass Heaven and Earth;
When you think of me I will listen and hear;
For time is boundless; don't wait for tomorrow to say
Know that I am with you, for I am just a thought away.

Belly Alejado Bermejo, 66, is a mid lawyer, the wife of lawyer Rodolfo Bermejo, the mother of six professionals, and a grandmother to one of 10 siblings who have made every morning a tribute to life.

HIGH BLOOD

Belle Alejado-Bermejo

BEZZ also likes to know the scenes of the unyawnsbeing and drama, other makes their blood pressure rise or flatter them with a smile. Send BEZZ stuff with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

INQUIRER Visayas

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Canadian in search of origins of 'aswang'

By Felipa V. Celino
Roxas City

A YOUNG FILMmaker from Canada is doing a documentary regarding the origin of the word "Aswang" in the Philippines.

"We are hoping to make the documentary the most comprehensive and informative presentation of the word Aswang and the myths surrounding it," says High Inside Entertainment Ltd.'s Canadian filmmaker Jordan Clark.

Clark, 26, is in Capiz to conduct research and interviews regarding the origin of the "Aswang."

Clark makes it clear he is not a believer of the "Aswang" (witch or vampire).

In fact, Capiz, Roxas City in particular, "is the cleanest city in the Philippines and the hospitality is second to none" and Aswangs do not exist in the province.

Clark, whose visit here last month was his fifth trip to Capiz, said he only wants to search and discover the origin of the word "Aswang" and map out the anatomy of the myth, which he believes originated here in Capiz.

BOATS are moored on Olocayan Island.

CANADIAN filmmaker Jordan Clark visits Olocayan Island, which can be reached by boat, a 30-minute trip from Roxas City.

Exploring Capiz

With the help of some residents, Clark, in the next nine days, will travel to various parts of the province to interview old timers who might know how and when Capiz became known as a haven of Aswangs.

For instance, the province of Capiz has been regarded as a haven of evil persons possessed with black magic.

Capitcitos have been, and still are, being derisively called "Aswang" — half-bodied, flying monsters hungry for human flesh and blood.

No one in Capiz can say with authority how the myth began, except for a tale that says that the people of old used to tell stories of the horrible characters to scare children and stop them from leaving the house and roaming around after the o.p.m. Angelus.

Aswang Festival

But such ugly stories about Capiz and its people has taken to tell on the progress of a province that is otherwise abundant in natural resources and tourist attractions.

On Oct. 20 to 30, 2004, the municipal council ratified one which renamed festivity to the land, the Aswang Festival, organized by a nongovernmental group, Dagit Capiznon, Incorporated.

The festival, meant to make fun of Capiz's symbolic "home of the Aswangs" tag through a Halloween-like festivity held as a prelude to the All Souls Day and All Saints Day celebrations, backfired on the organizers and drew the ire of the Catholic hierarchy and some local officials.

The Capiz diocese condemned the holding the Aswang Festival as an act of idolizing the devil.

Some local officials and holding the festival has negative effects on the economy of Capiz, which is being promoted heavily as the Seafood Capital of the Philippines.

Living with the tag

Contending that the festival would "glorify evil," the opposition gathered and held indignation rallies. And when Former Capiz Gov. Vicente Bermejo assumed mayor of Roxas City in July 2007, the controversial festival was scrapped.

But Capitcitos still have to live with the "Aswang" tag.

And this is what Clark wants to downplay in his documentary, and, later, in a film he will call "Aswang: A Journey Into Myth."

Clark says he wants to put together an improvised Docu-Movie not only about Filipino folklore, but also about the artist's process and how myth is perpetuated through their work.

It is about a creative mind eventually sculpting a new reality, he says.

Shot throughout Victoria, Australia Colombia's downtown, as well as in the Philippines, Clark says his film will offer a terrific view of the melding of myth and reality and how the two, when combined, result in "a greater truth that strikes one in fact on their own."

Clark says the Dana Moore/ suspense film will star Filipino-Canadian stage actress Janice Justice Salibo (in her screen debut), along with a special appearance from the "Diamond Star" of Filipino Cinema, Maricel Soriano.

Save Olocayan

Clark says he will share the documentary, and the film in Canada sometime next year, the proceeds of which will be used to raise funds to help restore power in Olocayan Island in Roxas City and support projects of dyslexia problem-readers in Capiz.

Olocayan, an island 30 minutes by boat off the coast of Roxas City, is just 2km-2km square kilometer with 988 inhabitants of which almost 80 percent are extremely poor.

The island's coral reefs had been killed over the last 20 years due to destructive fishing methods. Save Olocayan, incorporated is dedicated to rehabilitating and preserving the marine life of Olocayan so that local inhabitants can continue their fishing livelihood.

The island has one source of electricity, a generator given three four years ago by the city's previous mayor, Antonio del Rosario.

The residents contribute for the daily gas expenses and maintenance of the generator but because the meager income of the island's residents, there were not enough contributions to fire up the generator.

The unreliability of the generator is undeniable. The islanders need the electricity in school to their needs at night, especially those with babies and young children. They also need to, among others, charge cellphones, which enables them to contact the police in case of a medical emergency or illegal intrusion to their marginal fishing grounds.

Save Olocayan's primary objective, according to its president Peewell A. del Rosario, is marine conservation and rehabilitation that will address the poverty and livelihood problems in the island. Save Olocayan Inc. and High Banks Investment Ltd. have begun a joint project to assist in a solar power project and education of the people, he says.

Initial funds were raised in May 2008 from a fundraiser in Canada, which went to help Olocayan after Typhoon Frank devastated the island.

Del Rosario says the vision for the project is to make the island a multiamended, ecotourism destination famous for its ancestral marine life preservation and pristine environment managed by an empowered community in partnership with the government and the private sector by 2011.

Dystonia Parkinsonism

Part of the film's proceeds will be used to help Capitcitos afflicted with dystonia parkinsonism.

According to a study published in Journal of Clinical Pathology in 2003, the syndrome known as dystonia parkinsonism (DOP), also referred to as "lubag" in Asian-American literature, was described in 1975 as occurring exclusively in Panay Island. It is an adult onset, sex linked, predominantly male, severe, progressive movement disorder with high penetrance and high frequency of generalization.

The presence of a high concentration of patients with DOP in Capiz was first noted in the 1970s when Dr. George L. Mercado of Roxas City referred four of Dr. six cases labeled as "dystonia musculorum deformans" to the neurology section of the Philippine General Hospital.

As of year 2000, 373 cases of DOP had been registered with the Philippine SDP project based at the Philippine Children's Medical Center in Metro manila and in Roxas City. One hundred five of these patients have died.

The 268 survivors in a population of 1,000,000 have a symptomatic rate of 26 for every 100,000. For the entire island of Panay, the prevalence rate is 4,737/1,000,000, the study said.

Among the provinces in Panay, Capiz has the highest prevalence at 21.94/100,000 cases, which translates to one for every 4,000 men. Aklan has the next highest rate at 7.72/100,000. Capiz and Aklan once belonged to a single province. The figures suggest that SDP is endemic in Panay, particularly to Capiz.

Bid to hike rice yield is a race against population increase

By Carlo P. Santos
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD City—The government's campaign to attain self-sufficiency in rice by 2010 is a race against population growth, Agriculture Undersecretary Edmund Sajan said on Wednesday.

Sajan, who met with Negros Occidental officials at the Capitol in Bacolod City, said that although the country's production of rice has been rising, the population is also increasing and sometimes in an even faster rate.

This results in increased consumption.

"We are having a race in the production of rice and the production of babies," he said.

A good population management program could complement government efforts to increase rice production and help balance supply and demand in the long term, he said.

He didn't say, however, if the pending Reproductive Health bill in the House of Representatives is an example of a good population management project.

Tough job

Sajan maintained that the country has to ensure that the measures in rice production in the next five years would meet the requirements of a growing population for the country to achieve rice self-sufficiency.

"If population management is not good, it will be a difficult job for those in the agriculture sector," he said.

He said the country currently produces 92 percent of its rice needs and Negros Occidental produces 8% to 9% percent of the province's needs.

Importation from neighboring countries has brought down the prices of rice that were expected to stay at current levels until the end of the year, Sajan said.

But the country has to increase rice again next year until it could secure its rice self-sufficiency target by 2013, he said.

The PHILRI distributes irrigation, education and training of farmers and fisherfolk, loans, dryers and other post-harvest facilities, and seeds of high yielding and hybrid varieties program launched by President Macapagal-Arroyo would help the country reach the goal.

"We believe that good quality seeds can contribute 15 to 20 percent of the incremental yield that will propel us to, words will sufficiency," and farms who had been placed in charge of the seeds component of the program.

IN MANY RURAL areas, villagers adopt crude ways to dry palay. The lack of storage and other facilities keeps millions of Philippine farmers dependent on middlemen and usurers.

Across the NATION

'Spirits' fill Cordillera upland folk's remembrance of dead

By Maurice Malanes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—MANY CORDILLERA upland folk are practically spirit-filled each day of their lives and not only shortly before or during Halloween.

So it's not surprising to see no elder rubbing away a prayer and pouring a drop of native wine or liquor before he and others partake of their drink in someone's home or at the neighborhood variety store.

In Ifugao town in Benguet, this practice, called *pedi*, is for spirits, which include those of soldiers who fought and died in World War II and other members of the community who had gone ahead.

It is believed that the *pedi* helps assure that nothing accursed will happen to those partaking of the wine and liquor.

With the *pedi*, the discussion and the exchange of ideas and stories of men in the community will run smoothly as the spirits are not only watching over but guiding and inspiring them.

On the other hand, failure to perform the *pedi* or running out some important ounces of dead ancestors while performing the rite will be suspected as the cause of some troubles such as violence that may mar the drinking session and discussions.

There are also spirits in the mountains, forests, rivers and caves.

The Kankanaey believe that the subsiding and pissed-off fire in the mountains and forests. Leave the abode of these spirits in a watery bending tree much like the balete.

A tree believed occupied by these spirits, therefore, cannot be cut. Otherwise, something untoward such as sickness or even death can befall a person who dares to cut the tree.

It's true but to be cut because a road has to be built, for example, the spirits have to be appeased through a ritual, which involves sacrificing and butchering an animal such as a pig or chicken.

The rivers also have spirit guardians called *pinsan*.

With these spirits, a person has to seek first their consent before he goes swimming or fishing. To get consent, one can first throw a pebble in a river pool and enter a short prayer offered to the *pinsan*.

A no can be the *pinsan* is denying the river. It is believed that a person who defiles the river can get sick, a belief commonly among upland folk who take their indigenous spirituality seriously.

Palawan share in oil find uncertain

TERMINAL
In Puerto, Carabinos Sur, the main mode of transportation has become pedicabs, pedal-powered contraptions fashioned out of bicycles and a carriage. These pedicabs have overborne a portion of a road in the remote municipality into a terminal where their drivers await passengers.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—THE DEPARTMENT of Energy has declined to categorically acknowledge Palawan's new claim to a share in the proceeds of the newly discovered Galoc oil fields some 65 kilometers north of the province.

According to the DOE, this position is tied to the final adjudication by the Supreme Court on the overlapping claims of the province's ownership of the offshore gas reserves of Malampaya.

Energy officials told the provincial board Tuesday that unless the SC decides favorably in Palawan's favor in the case of the disputed local government share of the Malampaya natural gas royalty, it will treat the Galoc facility as outside the jurisdiction of Palawan, hence its local share for the purpose as contemplated in the Local Government Code.

Similar to Malampaya

"Galoc is similarly situated with Malampaya which is that it is very far from the mainland," Director Allen Reyes, head of the Energy Development Resource Bureau, told the Inquirer following a question-and-answer session of the provincial board.

In the case of the Camago-Malampaya gas reserves, which is located over 80 kilometers offshore El Nido in northern Palawan, the national government has refused to recognize the province's assertion of territorial jurisdiction over the reserves and has sought arbitration by the SC which, until now, remains pending in the tribunal.

Vice-Gov. David Penas de Leon said that while the local government has won its case in the lower courts in Palawan, "it is not a unanimous decision and we still await the final SC ruling."

Windfall

The province stands to earn over P2 billion in accumulated windfall revenues from the Malampaya gas reserves if it wins a favorable ruling.

The Galoc field, which is owned by Nido Petroleum Ltd. and operated by a consortium led by Galoc Production Company and Nido Petroleum Phils., is believed to be much smaller in magnitude compared to Malampaya, with a current total production of 20,000 barrels per day, equivalent to 6 percent of the country's daily oil consumption.

Energy officials said they are not yet in a position to predict how much exactly will the oil well produce once it enters commercial production around May next year as target.

"We don't know how much oil per day will be extracted once we go into commercial production as even right now, we are just barely into the third week of test production," Galoc's Reyes Palmiol said.

Earlier estimates announced by the DOE indicate that the Galoc complex may contain some 10 million barrels in reserves.

Under the service contract agreement, the Philippine government will receive 60 percent of net proceeds while the consortium will get the remaining 40 percent.

Typographical error

The DOE and Galoc Production Company officials also apologized to the provincial board after their attention was called to the printers being released by DOE that describes the location of Galoc as located west of Calion Island, Philippines, seemingly omitting Palawan as having jurisdiction.

"I think it is simply a typographical error. We will correct that," Palma said.

DOE officials said they have been closely coordinating with provincial government agencies concerning the operations of the oil facility, and have already met with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development on the creation of a Palawan-based monitoring body to ensure the facility's environmental compliance. *Redempto D. Anda, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

COA says ₱31M in Isabela funds unliquidated

ILAGAN, ISABELA—THE COMmission on Audit (COA) has ordered Isabela officials to liquidate accumulated cash advances amounting to ₱31.23 million last year, according to a 2007 COA report.

Government auditors, led by Ignacio Bulilan, regional chairperson, said the unliquidated cash advances were not authorized under a COA circular issued on Feb. 10, 2007.

The COA asked Gov. Maria Grazia Cielo Padaca to direct the immediate settlement of the cash advances and urged her to impose legal sanctions on concerned officials in force them to liquidate their respective cash advances. The COA report was only released recently.

Dalisay was not available for comment at the said office concerned officials were in Cauayan on official visit.

Hail Fernandez, provincial administrator, said he wanted to read the COA report before issuing statements.

The COA found out that at least ₱6.12 million in financial assistance and subsidies were given to different local governments units during the 2007 elections.

The COA urged the Isabela government to observe the rules in the release of public funds during the election period and to direct their recipients to submit a report of completion of the funded projects.

The funds were spent for the repair of roads as well as construction of barangay halls, bridges, day care centers and drainage canals a portion of the money was also spent for livelihood.

Isabela officials said the provincial government did not violate the ban on expenditures of public funds during the election period. *Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Korean's death in gambling villa suicide, say cops

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A Korean man was found dead in a villa at the Fontana Leisure Park in the Clark Freeport, north of this city on Tuesday.

Kim Byn-Ajet, who was in his 40s, apparently committed suicide, according to Senior Supt. Eleazar Tayga, chief of the police district department of the Clark Development Corp.

Tayga said Kim left a note, written in Korean, in which he said: "I did not do anything good in my life. I did bad things."

Reports received by Tayga said Kim had reportedly incurred huge gambling-related debts. He owed—and was to honor—parlors in South Korea, it was learned.

He had been in Clark for a week, staying as a guest of one Michael Ong, said Tayga. Investigators found the body hanging from the curtain rod of the living room of Villa 1609 on Bonifacio Drive in Fontana at 9:30 a.m. *Rosario Bergia, Inquirer Central Luzon*

In Cebu, PNP chief finds solace in Cardinal Vidal

By Rosvenn Magallanan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—INSTEAD OF supporting calls for the resignation or leave of absence of the embattled Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal urged the police chief to remain strong and carry on with his duties.

Cardinal Vidal dismissed calls for PNP Director General Jesus Versoza to resign or take a leave of absence amid the recent scandal that stained his fraternity, saying that Versoza must be given a chance to lead the PNP.

He urged Versoza to be brave enough to struggle amid the difficulties that he faces.

The archbishop also advised the police chief to be courageous and firm in his decision.

"When I heard that some people were advising him to step down, I protested," Vidal told reporters after the signing of the memorandum of agreement between the Archdiocese of Cebu, the PNP and Bilash Foundation for the visitor formation and moral recovery program of the police organization.

In response, Versoza expressed gratitude to the archbishop for his prayers and encouragement.

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PNP CHIEF Jesus Versoza seeks the blessing of Cebu's highest Church official, Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal.

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Gov't restores 3 percent import tariff on crude oil

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH GLOBAL OIL PRICES having declined significantly, the government has restored the regular 3 percent import tariff on crude and petroleum product imports, to take effect today.

The government initially cut the tariff to 2 percent in January and scrapped it altogether in June to September when crude oil capped $150 a barrel, to reduce fuel prices and help curb rising inflation.

"It's a policy direction that we have to go back to 3 percent because the triggers are no longer there," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said.

But the restoration of the 3 percent tariff should not be expected to raise fuel prices, said Jesus Mosquda, the director of the energy department's oil industry management bureau.

Mosquda said the impending fuel price rollbacks in line with the retreat in crude prices would more than offset the 50-centavos-per-liter impact that the tariff would have on pump prices.

"Even with the tariff back at 3 percent, we can still expect a rollback," she said.

The government said the tariff would not have an impact on revenues.

To mitigate the impact on consumers of the recent escalation of global oil prices, the government adopted a policy of suspending the tariff on crude and petroleum product imports when specific price triggers are met.

Under an order issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo last January, the tariff adjustment is set by one percentage-point increments when the price of benchmark Dubai crude and Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) diesel prices hit certain trigger price points.

It is cut to 2 percent from the regular 3 percent when the prices of benchmark Dubai crude rises to $60 per barrel and the MOPS-based diesel tire $105 a barrel.

The tariff is reduced further to 1 percent when Dubai crude hits $91 and MOPS-based diesel $110.

The import tariff is scrapped altogether if Dubai crude tips $120 a barrel and MOPS-based diesel $135 a barrel.

Regional oil prices are reviewed during the first 15 days of each month, and the average prices during that period are then used as a basis for deciding to adjust the tariff should it be adjusted.

The tariff level for June was brought down to zero, the first time that the tariff was entirely scrapped since the policy was implemented earlier this year.

It has been pegged at zero since then, until October when it was restored to 2 percent.

Mosquda said October's 3 percent was pegged as a result of tailspinning world oil prices. In November, the tariff goes back to the regular 3 percent.

Dubai crude averaged $66 per barrel in October, down sharply from the September average of $93.90, according to figures from the Department of Energy.

US light crude fell to below $64 a barrel yesterday, less than half a record more $138 in July on worries a global recession would curb demand. With Reuters

Cut in cooking gas next

From page A1

According to DOE data, the international customer price of LPG plunged to $884 per metric ton in October from $826 per MT in September.

The customer price jumped to as high as $936.33 per MT in July, the same month Dubai crude dayabarrel to its highest price of $147 a barrel.

Biggest rollback ever

Prices of crude and finished products have significantly fallen on dose, prompting a series of pump price reductions domestically.

Last Thursday, the oil companies reduced prices of gasoline by P2 to P2.50 a liter, of kerosene by P2 a liter and of diesel by P5 to P6 a liter. The diesel reduction was the single biggest rollback ever recorded in the domestic oil industry.

Mosquda said customer can expect even more fuel price cuts in the coming weeks, but did not cite specific figures.

Business said however, subsequent price reductions might not be of the same magnitude as the one implemented this week.

"The P5-a-liter rollback on diesel already reflected whatever reductions are run implement, considering prices in the world market. The market is very volatile, it's difficult to predict where prices will go. It's even possible that there may no longer be any rollback. It's really hard to tell since crude prices go up and down every day," she said.

"People have to understand that while crude prices have fallen, we're still stuck with high-priced inventories. We started implementing rollbacks as soon as world markets prices fell, even when we still had inventories bought at higher prices. We're hoping it comes to second prices. We can't do anything," she said.

Unpredictable prices

Petron said Petron was facing a difficult time making its buying plans, because of the volatility of international fuel prices.

Petron's consultants, for example, were working with a price band of $80 to $120 a barrel—a relatively wide $40-a-barrel band to base its buying plans.

The lower end of the range, she explained, was the marginal cost of production of newer oil fields, or the lowest possible price that newer fields could offer.

The higher end of the range, on the other hand, was for the highest possible price that would be offered without prompting a demand decline.

"We have to work within a large price band since prices have become too volatile," she said.

Fernando Barrinuevo, chair and chief executive of Barrinuevo Petroleum Corp., said it was no longer even possible to come up with decent forecasts based on historical trends.

"All I can say is that October prices have already been reflected at the pump. I have no outlook yet for November, but can't really say anymore I where prices will go until we're there," he said.

RP priest in sex case banned in New York

From page A1

to comment on the lawsuit. They did not have contact information for Elmo at the name of an attorney he has.

Elmo, said to be 44, had been visiting from Texas and served as parishes in Brooklyn and Queens.

[The media office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines in Manila said Elmo is not included in the CBCP directory and it has no information except that he was ordained in the Philippines in 1992 and was assigned to the Brooklyn diocese.]

'You are like a thunderbolt'

The suit, filed in the Brooklyn State Supreme Court, said the affair began after the 30-year-old plaintiff went to confession at Our Lady of the Snows Church in Queens and told the priest about her divorce from an abusive husband.

She says he began "encouraging her to engage in a sexual liaison with him to assist her in overcoming her pain associated with her husband and because it was 'ordained by God,'" according to the lawsuit.

According to ABC News, Elmo supposedly told the woman, "Your presence struck me like a thunderbolt."

In a separate report, the New York Daily News said that, according to the lawsuit, it went on for Brooklyn apartment where the priest had his Viagra stashed.

Clenching a rose

As part of the suit, she provided photographs of him—one of him shirtless and kneeling over a bed with a picture of the Sacred Heart embraced on a Long Island beach and a third showing him clenching a rose in his mouth.

The relationship ended earlier this month, she said, after she received an e-mail from the priest telling her he had "developed a rash in his groin and legs and believed it was from his sexual liaisons with others."

The Daily News reported that Elmo's parishioners were "shocked" at the news. In general one of them, Michaela Cuenca, is saying: "He came across as a pretty good person to me. I want to say I don't believe it." Reports from AP, Reuters, Newsday and Inquirer Research

Pagcor man almost runs over top cop

From page A1

Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, Manila Police District director, decided to drop charges of reckless driver and attempting to assault an officer of the law.

A police report on the incident said Del Rosario, a resident of 4277 Hawkeye St., Paliatan, Makati City, was driving a heavily tinted red Honda Civic (TLE 837) with an "Office of the President" sticker pasted on the windshield when he allegedly tried to run over Rosales, who was overseeing the flow of traffic on Quezon Boulevard.

Del Rosario also barely missed PO3 Michael Tecle and PO1 Daniel Mendoza who had tried to arrest him.

The report said the incident occurred around 9:30 a.m. after the MPD director alighted on Quezon Boulevard to personally order the removal of parked vehicles obstructing traffic in Quiapo.

When Rosales ordered Del Rosario to move his car, the latter allegedly refused and instead drove straight toward the officer, who quickly jumped out of the way. Tecle and Mendoza saw what happened and acted to flag down Del Rosario's car, which sideswiped and almost hit the two security aides as well, the report said.

The MPD policemen caught up with Del Rosario when he got stuck in traffic. Rosales ordered the driver, accusing him of befriending police officers and outwardly his men on being him to the MPD headquarters on United Nations Avenue. Del Rosario identified himself as an employee of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

Five hours later, Rosales forgave the erring motorist, who, on the verge of tears, apologized saying he was confused at the time.

Del Rosario's father, Gary, also begged the Manila police chief for forgiveness. It was then that Rosales relented, saying Del Rosario's promise he would never disrespect men in uniform again.

Obama's millions drowning McCain

NEW YORK—JIGSAW TALKS. Barack Obama's mega money gifts.

That's the ruthless lesson of the Democrat's advertising war against Republican White House rival John McCain.

Splurging a forecasted $298 million, Obama is breaking not only spending records, but his campaign's ability to keep the dubois ahead of Tuesday's presidential election.

"The discussion about this election begins and ends with Obama's fundraising," said Evan Tracey, head of the Campaign Media Analysis Group. "If he goes on the air, it won't be solely because of advertising, but he'll have able in towns not McCain's moneys. That's a big advantage."

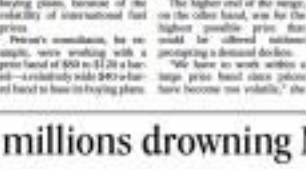
Obama's superiority was in display Wednesday when he spent $5 million to $5 million placing a 30-minute infomercial on national nets, weeks—not just at prime-time, but right before the final World Series baseball game.

That kind of money is funding a blitz in seven swing states, including Florida and Virginia, where Obama's ads this week outnumbered McCain's by 1.51 percent, said television rating analyst Nielsen.

Dr. No

And despite being outgunned, Obama's opponents have often produced the best lines—and toughest attacks.

McCain's zingers include saying Obama is a Britney Spears or Paris Hilton-type airhead.



US DEMOCRATIC presidential candidate Barack Obama (center, background) speaks as two pumpkins carved with the message "Vote Obama," sit on stage during a rally at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, on Thursday. AFP

He's the biggest celebrity in the world, but is he ready to lead?"

Yet although McCain ads can draw homer—over portraying Obama as fraud villain Dr. No—they are mostly defined by negative tone. One ranks the Illinois senator in "dangerous" by unprepared to be president.

A study by the University of Wisconsin found that 67 percent of McCain ads were pure attacks against Obama over four months, compared to 26 percent emphasizing McCain's positive points.

By contrast, 35 percent of Obama's ads smacked McCain and 39 percent focused on the Democrat's plans.

Money is creativity

Obama is also setting new standards for innovation in reaching customers, painting his Barrinuevo voters.

He's placing ads in video games, delving into social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter, and making use of mobile phone text messaging.

Another, from pro-Obama private investment group, is a spoof news clip reporting Obama's defined by just one vote. Anyone can e-mail the clip after customizing the report to identify a friend as the outgirth—a result eight million people have already joined.

And his wife Michelle Rightly, McCain has appeared badly billed to lead a killer Obama.

Trump said Obama isn't necessarily some device—just skilled.

"Money empowers creativity," he said. AFP

1 key state decides White House race

From page A1

Bush Iowa and New Mexico. That would leave him with 264 votes—just six shy.

That being the case—and with the caution that polls have proven faulty many times in the past—Obama would only need a victory in any one state from among Ohio, with 20 electoral votes; Virginia, 13; North Carolina, 15; and Florida, 27.

Ohio is particularly critical. The state was highly contested four years ago, when it put George W. Bush back in the White House. Obama has not stood for a Democrat since 1964 and no Republican has ever won the executive mansion without winning the state sitting back to Abraham Lincoln in 1860.

Florida, likewise, presents a significant history. In the disputed 2000 contest between Bush and then Vice President Al Gore, the US Supreme Court stepped in to end an extended recount, giving the election to Bush. Gore won the state's popular vote.

The four states all lie in the US Midwest's Rust zone, where polls will be closing first. Thus, an Obama victory in any one of them could be a strong prediction of the election's final outcome.

McCain leads in Ohio, Virginia

But McCain, a victory in all four of those states—where the latest Associated Press/GFK survey shows Obama leading on tied—still would not get him to 270 electoral votes.

The AP poll places Obama leading McCain by 7 percentage points, 49-41, in Ohio and by a similar margin, 49-42, in Virginia. In Florida and North Carolina, Obama holds 2-point leads, both within the polling margin of error.

Among all likely voters, a new Associated Press-Ipsos News poll shows Obama leading McCain, 51 percent to 43 percent, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. The survey found, however, that one in seven—or 14 percent—still hasn't decided for sure.

Among those, combined with those in the other four states battleground states, would put him over the 270 mark.

Ipsos polls show Obama with a hefty margin in Pennsylvania.

McCain rallies underdog role

All such permutations and combinations depend, of course, on polls proving correct and the absence of kickers in store by state voting.

Some of the scenarios depending on the fastest intelligence and most late-arrivers over-the-top. Republican Indiana, Missouri, Colorado and Nevada, any of which Obama could win.

Some polls show Obama with slight leads—within the margin of error—in both Indiana and Missouri, while other surveys put him significantly ahead in both Nevada and Colorado. None of these four states, however, would come into play unless McCain polls several points beyond Pennsylvania to stave that will be closing first in the eastern United States.

McCain is intensifying his underdog message. Feeling pressured, "we're a country hard" in the two opinion Obama.

"We're going to fight it out on the economic grounds," McCain said. "See, Obama's economic policy is from the far left of American politics and socialism to the country."

Obama, who spent millions blanketing the US television networks with a paid political appeal, continued to hammer home his message that the US needs a change course.

When the polls close on Tuesday, you don't want to say to yourself, 'Here's something I didn't do, here's an argument I didn't make, here's a hand I didn't shake,'" Obama said in an interview with ABC television.

Both campaigns have invested heavily in turning out early voters, which Obama expects to help his victory.

According to Dr. Michael P. McDonald of George Mason University, 17.5 million Americans have already cast ballots under provisions for early voting, almost 14 percent of the 126 million cast in the 2004 election. Reports from AP, Reuters

More Sports on A19 to A22

Late SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Malasmas
Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Gloria

Norwood, Mercado power Rain or Shine past TNT

By Nonong K. Castillo

GABE NORWOOD AND SOLOMON MERCADO HAVE BEEN PLAYING AS GOOD AS ADVERTISED—and pretty soon, maybe get even better.

After helping seal Rain or Shine's 104-90 victory over Talk 'N Text in the BFC-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum last night, Norwood was made to ponder on whether he had already shown everything he had in coffee or tea pebble.

"Not yet," Norwood answered.

And it is a scary proposition for other teams considering that he and fellow super rookie Solomon Mercado have made people wonder out loud just how far the Elasto Painters can go with the talented duo leading the way.

"If we keep playing our game, then it would be tough for them (opponents) to keep up with us," the No. 1 overall pick told scribes after the match that boosted Rain or Shine to its finest start in franchise history.

"Basically, if we stop playing our game (we won't make the playoffs)," Norwood added. Rain or Shine has now won four games in as all Pilipinas tournaments for the first time.

In the, Norwood has been content to create scoring opportunities for his teammates, much like when he did against Talk 'N Text last night.

"That's just the way I have adapted to playing," the 6-foot-5 former George Mason star explained. "Hopefully, I can continue to excite people. I'm having fun playing with this team."

But that doesn't mean his presence wasn't felt offensively.

Mercado showed the way for the Elasto Painters with 20 points—including seven very big ones—while Norwood added 16 points, including a clinching follow-up dunk and two free throws inside the final 60 seconds which helped the Painters rise to 4-3.

Mercado capped his night with five straight points launched in a 17-unreturned spree which made it 94-85 standing since the final 2:09. That was a solid enough buffer that the Tropang Texters couldn't overcome, thus falling to 3-4.

"We're not playing the smartest basketball out there," Norwood said with a smile. "But we're playing hard and it keeps us in the game."

Talk 'N Text fell for the second straight time in spite style after absorbing a 104-102 loss to Red Bull on Wednesday. Last night, the Texters waited by as many as 23 points late in the third period, 70-50, before working up and making a game out of it.

Mac Cardona tied existing the Texters by shooting 14 of his night-high 27 points in the fourth quarter. But Mercado and Norwood took turns in hitting the shots that hurt to settle the outcomes.

"It was a test of character for us," Rain or Shine coach Caloy Garcia said. "We wanted to prove a point that we have good rookies in this team."

GABE Norwood of Rain or Shine tries to grab the rebound off Talk 'N Text rookie Jason Castro.

Purefoods acquires former top rookie Alvarez from Red Bull

PUREFOODS, WHERE IS NOT DOING as well as expected in the BFC Philippine Cup, added some franchise help yesterday by finalizing a deal with Red Bull that made former Rookie of the Year Rich Alvarez a Tender Juicy Giant.

The deal, which just sent Purefoods its first round pick in the 2011 draft, was sealed late Thursday night and put the former Blue Eagles' former do-everything star to his third team since winning the top rookie plum in 2005.

Purefoods is at 2-4 entering into its game against the streaking Air21 Express last night.

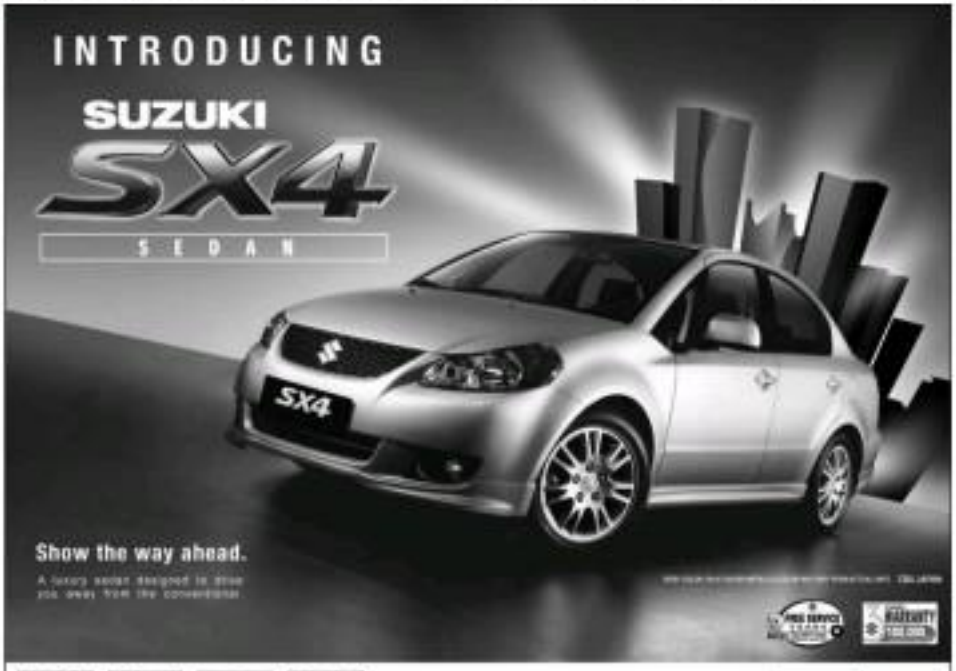
Alvarez' transfer came before the league president find Bull coach Yeng Guiao P20,000 and ordered him to perform community service for his actions in the Bacolod's winning game against Talk 'N Text last Wednesday.

Curiously Alvarez and James Yap will team up for the first time in their pro careers, four years after Alvarez, then playing for defunct Shell, defeated the gunslinger from University of the East for the MVP citation.

Guiao, meanwhile, apologized for giving referees and league officials the "bird" while walking off the floor late in the third quarter of a 104-102 victory.

He was thrown out for the first time this year after using profane language in arguing a call with the referees and flashed the dirty finger sign while being escorted by Antonio Gilberto security back to the Red Bull locker room.

"I offer no excuses and take full responsibility for my actions," Guiao said in a statement. "I only ask for the understanding of all concerned." *Nonong K. Castillo*



Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

12 armed men raid St. Scholastica

Men in SWAT uniform seize guards' guns, communication equipment

By Joannette I. Andrade

TWELVE MEN WEARING SPECIAL WEAPONS and Tactics (SWAT) uniforms raided before dawn yesterday a college in Malate, Manila and grabbed guns and communications equipment from stunned security guards.

The men, clad in camouflage pants and armed with high-powered guns, entered at around 1:05 a.m. the St. Scholastica's College campus at the corner of F. Ortigas and Leon Guinto Streets.

Reports by the Manila Police District Mobile Patrol Unit (MPD-MPU) revealed that the raiders were aboard two vehicles: a black Toyota Revo (SKL-237) and another vehicle that was not identified.

Elvin Concibe, security officer in charge, told police investigators they were surprised by the arrival of the "SWAT men" who quickly disarmed the guards on duty.

Concibe said the men took two caliber .9 mm pistols, two caliber .38 revolvers, four caliber 12-gauge and a handheld radio, then left through Gate 4 on Estrada Street, headed in the direction of South Superhighway.

A ranking official of the MPD who requested anonymity told reporters that the group simply intended to take the firearms.

"The group could be mocking us on firearms for a brownout," the official said. He said they could have targeted the school because they had noticed little resistance from the security guards.

Members of the MPD are conducting follow-up operations and have alerted other police units to intercept the Toyota Revo.

The raiders tried to get the side of the school on the Isaac Isaac Peral Street but their bus radio made it. Scholastica's College went unanswered, except for a recorded voice message saying all line operators were busy. A television evening news report, however, said the school would make a statement after an investigation.

MPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (CIDU) head Chief Insp. Dominador Acevedo said because that his unit at the theft and robbery section of Station 9 were not allowed to enter the school initially because of an ongoing meeting of officials.

Acevedo said theft and robbery section head Chief Insp. Benigno Macalalong went to the school to look into the robbery but was among those who were prevented from entering the building.

POLICEMEN requested to a call early Friday morning allow reinforcements guarding the ambulant school on Leon Guinto street caught by surprise and disarmed by men wearing the uniform of a crack police team.

Play it again, Dennis

By special request, this pianist recalls favorite tunes of dearly departed

By Claire Pedin-Bayley
Contributor

PIANIST DENNIS SITENG wants to make sad people happy with his music in this rather unusual place where he works—the lobby of the Loyola Memorial Chapels in Guadalupe, Makati City.

It all started four years ago when a classmate at the Philippine Women's University Conservatory of Music, Robert Estano, asked him to be his substitute. Sidney succeed to take a month-long vacation and he asked Dennis to take his place. Dennis immediately said yes, since the job would enable him to play the piano again, after he went in hibernation for several years.

When Robert told him what the job was, Dennis exclaimed: "Made do kanap bahay? Ha, pala kanap pampa? E di magdalene na ako ng pagiging embalsamador para kumpleto na ang exploits ko?" (Tonight I'll write a job for the living, not for the dead! I joked that I could just as well make a children being an embalmer so the package would be complete).

He also confessed to Robert that he had a mental fear of the dead.

But that was four years ago.

Today, four nights a week, at the newly renovated Loyola Memorial Chapels, and with a broad, fully landscaped garden as background, the piano (actually, a portable keyboard) resonates of throng are only soothes grieving relatives, but also provides them with an outlet to sing with him and forget their sadness while dishing out not only their favorite songs, but also melodies to remember the departed dearly beloved.

Dennis prefers to use his keyboard for the orchestra sounds it provides. "The melody becomes different when there are violins and drums," he explained.

"I am often asked to play 'Hindi Kita Malilimutan,' 'Oh My Papa,' or 'Minsa,'" said Dennis, "but I try to discourage those who request these pieces to choose another because it would only make them more sad. So I shift to bossa nova or jazzy tunes. As a breaker, I play silent music. But the happier the tune they ask me to play, the more I prefer it," added the father of two whose wife, Raquel, a piano teacher, influence to snatch her husband on the job of the funeral parlor.

Dropping out of the conservatory, Dennis did find a brand-new course at the Philippine Christian University where he graduated. Shortly after, he set up a school supplies store near his home on Washington Street in Makati.

Dennis started to play at several Makati hotels, but after a few years, he got bored and stopped playing the piano. He shifted to photography in the 1990s and became a commercial photographer taking shots of models and products. Then came Robert's urgent call to take over his job.

According to Danny Carnegie, administration supervisor of Loyola Memorial Chapels Guadalupe, the idea of providing music at the lobby to cheer and their visitors came from the late Victor Mendoza, former provincial treasurer.

"We are the only funeral that provides music for our clients," said Benny "When they hear the music, they feel glad and would even sing with the pianist." Church songs are the most requested tunes as well as songs of Basil Valdez, she added.

But Dennis' duties are not limited to playing at wakes. "Everytime we have special events like office anniversaries, staging reunions, Masses, we ask Dennis to accompany us on his piano," Carnegie said.

Dennis is an associate with Loyola management for his musical services and is paid every 15th and 30th of the month for playing from 9 p.m. till midnight only on Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays and Saturdays. "Some give me tips," he said, "but I don't encourage this. I don't want to intrude into their grief as they reminisce through my music. Hindi iyon ako mampak na lamplot, pati sa buhos," he laughed. "They could be crying are only because they feel and feel because of the tpd.

In the four years at Loyola, as a witness to his clientele fishers who left for Taiwan more than a year ago, Dennis has noted "peak seasons" in the number of deaths. "I have observed that if there is a sudden change in weather, more people get sick, and that in December and January, when people are more outside during the holidays, there is an increase in the number of customers at the funeral parlor," he explained.

Some may think Dennis has "wasted" years of studying in a conservatory for something so "lowly" as "glorified" in his job.

On the contrary Dennis said he provides a special service. "I empathize with grieving relatives as in," he said, "and I save the pain of losing a loved one more often than more anyone. I suppose, I am there to change the mood, to change the ambiance, to make grieving people happy once again, even briefly, through a empanied piece of music."

DENNIS SITENG, funeral pianist-player. Songs in the key of love

THE LOYOLA Memorial Chapel and Crematorium in Guadalupe, Makati City offers soothing music to visitors and clients in its spacious lobby, courtesy of its resident pianist.

Robber fails to take P670,000 from cashier

By Beverly T. Mendrial

A CASHIER OF THE TAO FOH SHIH almost lost P670,000 in cash to a motorcycle-riding thief at around 10:45 a.m. Thursday along 12th Avenue in Caloocan City.

Lourdes Flexano, 38, of William Shaw Street, Caloocan was driving his Chevrolet Suburban 1500 on his way to 95 Bank and Silverbank at 8th Avenue and 9th Avenue, respectively, to deposit the money.

He was accompanied by his bookkeeper Carlito Dantao and assistant accountant Danny Galagan.

The Caloocan City police reported that near the schools of St. Mary's and Maria Dame, an armed robber on board a motorcycle and wearing a white helmet and black jacket, suddenly appeared behind the vehicle and fired at the driver.

Flexano sped away towards 8, Samson Street on the way to their office on Shalom, two street from reported the incident to the police who immediately broadcast a manhunt for the suspect.

Valenzuela victim

On Monday morning, a young meat vendor in Valenzuela City was shot to death by three armed robbers, who stole some P490,000 in cash she was bringing to a bank.

Cristina Sisuera, 20, was hit in the heart and head in the head in front of the Philsat branch on MacArthur Highway, Valenzuela city.

The victim, a vendor at a meatshop at the SM Talipapa Market in Malinta, Valenzuela, was asked by the shop owner to bring the money to the bank.

Maid killed; suspect demands ransom for boss's release

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A HOUSEMAID WAS STRANGLED TO death and her employer held for ransom by a man who took them hostage for a day in Manila.

Manila Police District (MPD) homicide investigators were still trying to find out why 23-year-old Gerelle Bringuez, a native of Tarangnan, Camarines Sur, was tied up, gagged, strangled and bludgeoned to death and then stuffed inside a box by the suspect.

Her employer, Jennifer Reyes of Crimson Hotel, Sampaloc, was freed after her brother reportedly paid the suspect P600,000 in cash.

Manila Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (MPD-CIDU) head Chief Insp. Dominador Acevedo told reporters that the incident happened around 11:30 p.m. on Wednesday.

Reyes arrived home from work but as soon as she entered the front door, she was confronted by the suspect who wore a ski mask and had a gun pointed at her.

The man then demanded that she turn over to him her cellular phone and asked for her father's number.

The suspect informed Reyes' father Reynaldo, who was in Bicol, that he had kidnapped his daughter and wanted P5 million for ransom. He reportedly settled for P600,000.

The CIDU chief said the man, instructed Reynaldo to bring the money to Manila by 1 p.m. the next day.

Reynaldo then called his daughters and was told to leave the bag of money at the door and to put a bird in the trunk of his car.

"Mr. Reyes was ordered to drive around the neighborhood for two hours until after he (the burglar) called and was told to return to his daughter's house," Acevedo said.

But upon arrival the daughters found and gagged and discovered that the box in his car trunk contained the body of their maid.

Acevedo said Bringuez was strangled and bludgeoned repeatedly. Her head was covered with a plastic bag.

The police officer said they learned Bringuez had been working for the Reyes family for two weeks.

Acevedo added the maid could have been killed on the day of the break-in.

"We are looking for one suspect for sealed alone and probably knew Bringuez," Acevedo said.

HALLOWEEN FRANKSTERS

Child-size Halloween costume idea: put in a trick or treat sweet inside. San Beda's Gurrier Villa in Mendiola, Quiezon City

Ex-mayor of Mindanao town shot dead in Tondo

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE FORMER MAYOR OF MAITUM IN SARANGANI PROVINCE, who was accused of masterminding the killing of his predecessor, was found shot to death yesterday morning inside a cold storage plant in Tondo.

Felix Bagarit, 51, of Amplaya Street, Tondo, was lying in a pool of blood when found inside the Lee cold storage plant on Honorio Lopez Boulevard in Tondo.

The death followed last month's stroll by a Tarangnan regional trial court of a warrant for his arrest for the Nov. 11, 2006 killing of Mayor George Sibon.

Bagarit was once Sibon' vice mayor. He became mayor following Sibon' death.

Reports from the Manila Police District (MPD) homicide section showed that Bagarit's body was discovered at around 10:40 a.m. by security guard Alfredo Sandoy Jr. while monitoring a routine inspection. Sandoy immediately called the police but could not provide more information to homicide investigators.

PO3 Soriano Gaspedinan, case investigator, said Bagarit's wife Elmie said she last saw her husband at around 7:30 a.m.

Bagarit reportedly told his wife he was going to the plant to talk to someone. He carried a .45 caliber pistol.

Elmie, did not know who her husband was meeting and was surprised when told he was shot, the case investigator said.

Gaspedinan said the suspects must have taken the gun of the victim, who sustained three bullet wounds.

Bagarit name was trailing earlier after being accused of Sibon' killing. The Sibon family put up a P500,000 reward for information leading to the suspect's arrest.

In September, Sarangani RTC Executive Judge Jaime Soliman granted Bagarit's motion to quash the warrant of arrest against him after a witness recanted an extra-judicial confession linking the former mayor to the successor's death.

MPD homicide section operatives are conducting follow-up operations to identify Bagarit's killers and the motive for the killing.

Vehicle used in Delano killing found in Daet

By Julie M. Aurelio

POLICE LOCATED IN DAET, CAMARINES Norte province the vehicle allegedly used by suspects in the fatal shooting of congressman-elect Rodel Batocabe in Delano.

Investigators said they learned that the Asian utility vehicle (AUV) with plate number UBH 775 was owned by a certain businessman.

"Witnesses said three suspects boarded the vehicle after they walked away from the crime scene," said Chief Supt. Franklin Mision Mateo, chief of Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit.

Mahusay and homicide section head Supt. Marcelino Belmes Jr. were in Daet from Dec. 23-25 to look for the vehicle after it was traced to the town. The owner of the vehicle told investigators he had cars stolen when Mendiola recently and he did not bother his vehicle to report.

"He maintains he has since gone to Manila to taking the vehicle since 2005, but how could he explain the fact that it was seen by witnesses at the crime scene?" Mahusay said.

A background investigation by Camarines Norte provincial director Senior Supt. Noel Constantino revealed that the vehicle was not indeed in Daet. The SUV was impounded by police pending further investigation.

Delano, chief aide of Camporedo Valley Rep. Manuel Zamora, was shot by three men as he left his garage in Barangay Kaunlaran on Oct. 8. Batocabe and barangay kagawad who responded to the early morning shooting confirmed they saw the AUV on Oct. 9.

MetroBriefs

New arena for tobacco control advocates

TOBACCO control advocates yesterday heaped to the Manila North Cemetery to fight another for dead smokers and to denounce their demand for stricter tobacco control. The number of deaths from tobacco-related diseases seems a full ranking for the enforcement of graphic health warnings on cigarette packs was tied in Congress in December 2007 has already reached 176,882, according to the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control Alliance of the Philippines (FCAP). "And the death toll increases by 240 every day," it added. FCAP-led advocates from various local youth and various poor organizations also gathered signatures from cemetery visitors who support the immediate passage of the bill. Graphic health warnings showing the ill effects of smoking, such as photographs of severely damaged lungs or a mutilated baby on cigarette packs have been found to be among the most effective ways of curbing tobacco use, said Dr. Nikolai Limpin, FCAP's executive director.

Tina G. Santos

Social workers to Metro cemeteries

SOCIAL workers will also be deployed in various cemeteries in Metro Manila to help children and elderly persons lost in the crowd, according to National Capital Regional Police Office Chief Director Jeff Isorena. Together with Quezon City Police District Director, Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, the police officer inspected four terminals and the MRT stations yesterday to monitor security measures in these areas. The NCRPO chief said the social workers would be working with police women.

Nancy Carvajal

Bomb scare at SEC building

EMPLOYEES of the Securities and Exchange Commission left work earlier than usual Friday after operations in their headquarters at the corner of Edsa and Ortigas Avenue in Greenhills were disrupted by a prank bomb threat a little before lunchtime. Senior Supt. Eudru de Eugen Mambabayang police chief said a mail collect made to say a bomb would explode in the building without saying where or when. The first call was made at 9:15 a.m. while the second call was made at 9:30 a.m. Some 1,100 employees were asked to vacate their offices as the Explosive and Bomb squad searched the first 12 floors of the building for any suspicious items. None was found. SEC officials were clarified as to the motive of the bomb scare. "This wasn't the first time we received a threat from a prankster. We had a bomb scare in 2001, but nothing was found on the site," said SEC Commission Secretary Secretary Lucilan. Ed Yap and Alita Ann Zanoria-Lucas

Veterans' pensions via PVB ATM

VETERANS can now get their monthly old-age pensions from the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) through Philippine Veterans Bank Veteran Teller ATM. Solid or Cash card. A joint effort between PVAO and PVB, it aims to provide more options and convenience for PVAO pensioners across the country. Under the agreement, PVAO pensioners now have the option to get their monthly pensions via the Bank's 24-hour ATM service and through all Megalink, Expressnet and Bancnet ATMs nationwide. The new service was recently formalized on the 4 Memorandum of Agreement between PVAO and PVB represented by PVAO Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina and PVB President and CEO Ricardo A. Bellido Jr. Interested pensioners can inquire and enroll for the ATM service in any of the 45 PVB branches nationwide. The required minimum maintaining balance is only P100 for the pensioner's ATM, Debit or Cash Card account.

An open letter to Joc-joc Bolante

I HOPE THIS SHORT NOTE IS READ by former Agriculture Undersecretary Joc-joc Bolante:

Dear Joc-joc,

You were to prison in the United States through no fault of your own.

People you covered up for didn't lift a finger to get you out of the immigration jail.

They could have raised you a diplomatic passport or made representations with the US government since your boss, President Gloria, is very influential with George W. Bush, but they did not.

Are they worth going to prison for?

You suffered for them, Joc-joc, but they didn't think of you.

They are the kind of people who would leave a friend when he no longer has any use for them.

If you quit the Senate as dawn, your fellow Batasan will understand. Your contemporaries will praise you.

Don't be mean by hurting. Quit the house and get out. You will be a hero.

From a fellow like you,
Jess Tello

Bolante, a rich businessman, didn't need the job as agriculture undersecretary.

He accepted the job because Mike Arroyo, the President's husband, asked him to serve under Gloria.

Joc-joc couldn't say no to Mike, a relative.

Congressman said the suspects must have taken the gun of the victim, who sustained three bullet wounds.

Bagarit name was trailing earlier after being accused of Sibon' killing. The Sibon family put up a P500,000 reward for information leading to the suspect's arrest.

In September, Sarangani RTC Executive Judge Jaime Soliman granted Bagarit's motion to quash the warrant of arrest against him after a witness recanted an extra-judicial confession linking the former mayor to the successor's death.

MPD homicide section operatives are conducting follow-up operations to identify Bagarit's killers and the motive for the killing.

NEW MOTORCYCLES FOR COPS

Dr James G. Dy, board chair and president of the Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association Inc. and Ronaldo Dy, president of the Filipino-Chinese General Chambers of Commerce Inc., recently donated 15 motorcycles to the Philippine National Police. Dr. Dy (left) and Ronaldo Dy are shown handing over the motorcycle keys to Manila Police District Director Roberto Rosales (center).

EXCLUSIVE

NOW SHOWING AT GLORIETTA 4 & GREENBELT 3 CINEMAS

"★★★★"

"★★★★"

"...the best performance of Samuel L. Jackson since Pulp Fiction."

Vatican tightens screening guidelines for priests

VATICAN CITY—THE VATICAN issued new psychological screening guidelines for seminarians on Thursday—the latest effort by the Roman Catholic Church to be more selective about its priesthood candidates following a series of sex abuse scandals.

The Church said it issued the guidelines to help Church leaders weed out candidates with "psychopathic disturbances."

The scandals have rocked the Church in recent years, triggering lawsuits that have cost hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements.

The guidelines "become ever more urgent because of the sexual scandals," Msgr. Jean-Louis Brugues told reporters. He stressed, however, that psychological testing was useful in some jurisdictions as far back as the 1960s—or at least a decade before the sexual abuse scandals exploded in public.

"In all too many cases, psychological defects, sometimes of a pathological kind, revealed themselves only after ordination to the priesthood," the guidelines said. "Detecting defects earlier would help avoid many tragic experiences."

The guidelines said problems like "confused or not yet well-defined" sexual identities need to be addressed.

The Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests said the Vatican needs to go beyond screening seminarians in and what the group calls the Church's "virtually unchanged culture of secrecy and unchecked power in the hierarchy" that left dangerous priests in parishes.

"They lured still always have some bad apples," the Survivors Network said. "Real change requires effectively reforming the hatred and those who oversee it."

Vatican officials conducted an evaluation of US Roman Catholic seminaries in response to the abuse crisis to look for anything that could lead to the scandal. The evaluation was completed in July 2006, but the results have not been made public.

The bishops and seminary staff who conducted the study reviews gave special attention to what seminarians are taught about chastity and celibacy. The Vatican also directed the evaluators to look for "evidence of homosexuality" in the schools.

Studies commissioned by the bishops' conference found that the majority of known victims of abuse by priests in the last 50 years were adolescent boys. In response, some Catholic have blamed gay clergy for the scandal; experts say sex offenders received homosexuals are no more likely than heterosexuals to molest children.

"If the Church wants to rule out or screen out people who are risk for having people, they should be worried about how to screen out their sexual orientation," said Thomas Plante, a Santa Clara University psychology professor who conducts screenings of prospective Catholic priests. "Whether it's heterosexual or homosexual, it doesn't matter."

A 2005 Vatican document said men with "deep-seated" homosexual tendencies shouldn't be ordained, but that those with a "transitory problem" could become priests if they had overcome them for three years. The Vatican considers homosexual activity sinful.

The new guidelines reflect the earlier teaching, stressing that if a future priest shows "deep-seated homosexual tendencies," his seminary training "would have to be interrupted."

The guidelines say priests must have a "positive and stable sense of one's masculine identity" and the capacity to "integrate his sexuality in a correct way" with the obligation of celibacy.

The Church is struggling to provide enough priests for parishes in many parts of the First because of changing vocations. But Pope Benedict XVI has said it is more important to have good priests than a greater number of priests. AP

PRIESTS attend a Mass led by Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate the start of the Pontifical schools' academic year in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Dec. 10. REUTERS

Pope said to be considering freeze on Pius saintbood

VATICAN CITY—A JEWISH leader says Pope Benedict XVI is considering a request to freeze the sainthood process for wartime Pope Pius XII, who critics say did not speak out enough during World War II to save Jews amid Hitler's extermination campaign.

Rabbi David Rosen says the Pope made the announcement in a meeting on Thursday with a Jewish group and the Jesuit replied he would give "serious consideration" to the request to wait.

Rosen spoke after the Vatican rejected Jewish groups' requests to immediately open its secret archives on Pius XII's papacy during the Holocaust years.

Vatican spokesperson Rev. Federico Lombardi said the request to see the wartime archives were "inadmissible," but added on Thursday that it would take another look at the issue prior to sending those 16 million documents.

Currently, the archives can be consulted only up through the papacy of Pius XI's predecessor, Pius IX, which ended in early 1939, a few months before World War II began in Europe.

Pius XII was Pope Pius IX's secretary of state, as Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli. Some scholars who have examined archive documents dealing with the brave Pius XII's diplomacy say Pacelli was an industrious diplomat as Nazism and fascism took hold on parts of Western Europe.

The Vatican says Benedict has been reflecting on documentation gathered by Church officials about Pius XII's virtues as part of the process toward possible beatification, the last formal step before possible canonization. Benedict, marking the 50th anniversary recently of Pius' death, has described him as a great pope who opened an effort to try to save Jews.

Earlier this month, Israeli President Shimon Peres urged the Vatican not to let a commissions celebration to Pius XII stop Benedict from visiting the Holy Land sometime. A caption accompanying a photograph at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial alleges the wartime pope did not act to save Jews from the Nazi genocide.

Benedict met on Thursday with Rome and others from the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. The Pontiff called for "sincere dialogue" and called Church condemnation of all forms of anti-Semitism a "significant milestone."

Neither Benedict nor Rosen in their speeches mentioned the sainthood controversy.

Rosen said Jews were "profoundly grateful for all that the Holy See has said and done in recent times" to combat anti-Semitism and for improved thanks for Christians who "saved many Jews" during the Holocaust.

"We reiterate our respectful call for full and transparent access of scholars to all archival material from that period, as well as to documents of nunciatures and policies during that tragic period may have the credibility they deserve," Rosen said. AP

Australia rejects German doctor because son has Down syndrome

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIA'S DECISION TO DENY a German bone doctor permanent residency because his son has Down syndrome sparked outrage on Friday from disability groups who described the system as "archaic."

Bernhard Moeller, who has worked in rural Victoria for two years amid a chronic shortage of doctors in country areas, has been branded back by the immigration department because of his 13-year-old son's condition.

"I'm really disappointed that the government encouraged people to come here and fill the gap and tells people that there son is a burden for the society," Moeller told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"That's really disappointing, saddening and unfair because I am doing a lot for the rural Italian community and I am happy to do that."

The immigration department's decision is based on a system which has been in place for more than two decades and which can deny migrant permanent residency if they or their family fail to meet health requirements.

In Dr. Moeller's case, if his younger son doesn't require extensive care he could place a burden on tax-payer funded services in the future, the department said.

"It has nothing to do with the fact that he has Down syndrome per se, it can be any condition that potentially has a long term financial impact on the Australian community," the department's Peter Varkas said a press conference.

Down syndrome is a chromosomal abnormality caused by the presence of late or part of an extra chromosome, and causes mental retardation, slow physical development and an increased risk of health problems. AFP

Toll in India's wave of bombings rises to 77

GAUHATI, INDIA—THE LOVE OF SO-phisticated in the bombings that killed dozens of people in northeastern India's Assam state have escalated amid help from other terrorist groups to carry out the attacks, officials said on Friday.

The scale and planning behind Thursday's 13 coordinated blasts in Assam state targeted authorities, who struggled to determine who was behind the attacks—among the worst ever in a region plagued by separatist and ethnic violence.

The death toll in the explosions rose to 77 on Friday after more than a dozen people died from their injuries overnight, said Subhas Das, the state's home commissioner. More than 300 people were wounded.

Assam state Inspector General of Police Shankar Jyoti Mahanta said the state's largest separatist group, the United Liberation Front of Assam, was the main target of the investigation, but he added that the sophistication of the blasts suggested the rebel group was "assisted by a force who has adequate expertise in such attacks." He did not elaborate.

Anjan Bordoloi, a spokesperson for the United Liberation Front of Assam, denied his group had any role in the blasts.

ONE OF the bombed-out sites in Guwahati, the main city of India's troubled Assam state. REUTERS

The separatist group has never carried out an attack of the size and complexity which closely resembled those that have rocked other Indian cities this year. Those attacks were blamed on well-financed and well-armed Islamic militant groups.

Federal investigators and forensic experts sifted through the rubble of the blasts on Friday for clues.

Mahanta said that preliminary investigations indicated the militants had used PE-3, a complex plastic explosive.

On Friday, police fired rubber bullets to disperse angry mobs who took to the streets of the state capital, Gauhati, stoning and attacking vehicles and buildings, said C.K. Bhuyan, a local daily editor.

Similar incidents had taken place on Thursday.

A curfew was imposed in parts of the city on Friday, Bhuyan said, adding that no one was injured when police fired rubber bullets.

The bombs were planted in cars and rickshaws, and the largest explosion took place near the office of Assam's top government official, leaving bodies and charred, mangled metal and motorcycles across the debris-strewn street.

Bystanders dragged the wounded and dead to cars that took them to hospitals. Police officers covered charred bodies with white sheets in the streets.

India's northeast—an isolated region sandwiched between Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Burma (Myanmar)—is rife with a thin corridor connecting it to the rest of India...is beset by dozens of conflicts. More than 10,000 people have died in separatist violence over the past decade in the region.

In October, more than 50 people were killed in violence between members of the Bodo tribe and rival insurgents in the area, most of whom are Muslims.

The region is also home to dozens of separatist groups who accuse the government of exploiting the area's natural resources while doing little for the indigenous people—most of whom are ethnically closer to Burma and China than to the rest of India. AP

Bali bombers' brother proud as executions loom

TENGULUN, INDONESIA—A BROTHER of two of the Bali bombers on death row said on Friday he was proud of them as they prepared to face the firing squad over the terrorist attacks which killed 202 people.

Ali Fauzi, the younger brother of convicted terrorists Amrozi and Mukhlas, who said he was sure they were on the "right path" in their final days, after authorities said the siege was set for their executions.

"I met both of them last month and they told me 'don't be sad.' They always look so happy and I'm sure they're fighting on the right path," Fauzi said in an interview in his home village in East Java.

Looking relaxed and smiling broadly like his older brothers Amrozi, who is known as the "smiling assassin" for the beaming grin he sported throughout his trial, Fauzi said the family had nothing to be ashamed about.

"But we feel embarrassed or ashamed of what they have done? No we feel proud because in this world full of lies and accusations there are still people who are ready to fight against that," he said.

Wearing a sarong and a grey shirt and sporting a whisky goatee beard, Fauzi spoke candidly in a room at the islamic boarding school where he teaches Koranic studies to boys and girls from around the district.

At no point did he express regret for the carnage unleashed by his brothers on Oct. 12, 2002, which bombs they had made and planned into through packed tourist nightspots on the resort island of Bali.

More than 160 foreign holidaymakers including 88 Australians were killed in the blasts, one of the worst terrorist atrocities in the world since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Another brother, Ali Imron, is serving a life sentence for his role in the plot.

As his mother toiled in the maize fields that surround the simple rented village of about 3,000 people, Fauzi said the family had made its peace with the past.

Authorities have said Amrozi, 47, Mukhlas, 46, and Ali Imron, 38, will be executed by firing squad anytime from midnight Friday to mid-November. AFP

THE 5,300-YEAR-OLD remains of Otzi the Iceman, the mysteriously mummified man found high in the Alps in 1991 and preserved over the millennia thanks to deep chill and layers of snow. AP

Mummy's not our daddy—'Iceman' study

PARIS—GENETICISTS TESTing into the 5,300-year-old remains of Otzi the Iceman, the mysterious mummified man found high in the Alps, say he was likely fair-skinned, dark-eyed and probably bald.

Italian and British experts looked into the mitochondrial DNA—genetic material handed on down the maternal line—found from Otzi's body at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy.

Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is very stable, changing only gradually as it is handed down the generations, which means it is an excellent yardstick for genealogy.

Otzi's mtDNA belonged to a broad genetic category called K1, which is still common in Europe today. But investigators remain hazy on his origins.

However, modern Europeans today belong to about six lineages of K1, whereas Otzi's sub-lineage has most probably petered out.

"Our analysis confirms that Otzi belonged to a genetically unidentified lineage of K1 that has not been seen to date in modern European populations," said Martin Richards, a professor of biology at the University of Leeds in northern England.

"The frequency of genetic lineages tends to change over time, due to random variations in the number of children people have—a process known as 'genetic drift'...and in a remote, acute variants die out. Our research suggests that Otzi's lineage may indeed have become extinct."

Otzi, found in the eastern Alps a mere three feet below the border in 1991, was preserved over the millennia thanks to deep chill and layers of snow.

His body was found to be in an astonishing state of conservation, along with clothes and weapons that have given many clues into how people lived in the Late Neolithic age.

Scientists believe Otzi was around 46 when he died. He had been severely wounded by an arrow and possibly dispatched with a blow to the head by a cudgel.

In 1994, a probe into his mtDNA suggested that descendants of Ötzi's may be found today in Europe, but Richards said that this was based only on a small section of the cellular gene sequence. AFP

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Ebarra

Melamine concerns grow over China's livestock feed

BEIJING—CHINA'S STATE-RUN PRESS WARNED on Friday a toxic chemical found in eggs and milk was likely being mixed into livestock feed, in the clearest official indication yet that other foods may be contaminated.

"The feed industry seems to have neglected to agree on a way to stop the chemical or reduce production costs while maintaining the protein count for quality inspections," the state-run China Daily said in an editorial.

Authorities in the eastern metropolis of Shanghai have already ordered that more than 300 fish farming enterprises in the city be tested to see if their food is tainted with melamine, the Shanghai Daily reported.

It was one of the first reports that initially believed.

Melamine is an industrial chemical normally used to make plastics and can lead to severe kidney problems if ingested in large amounts by humans.

But, after an initial cover-up by Chinese authorities, it was eventually discovered that the chemical was being routinely mixed into watered-down milk to give it the appearance of being protein-rich.

Following the egg revelations, authorities are now investigating whether tainted melamine-laced feed for the same reason is also a widespread practice.

"We cannot say for sure if the same chemical has made its way into other types of feed," the China Daily editorial said.

"We hope it does not. But if [so], the case be confirmed is the source of contamination for both the eggs and milk, action must be taken to check how raising and the use of this chemical is in the feeded industry."

Meanwhile, the Chinese company blamed for selling the original batch of tainted eggs to Hong Kong is suing its feed provider, according to the official People's Daily newspaper.

The brief report said an investigation by the company, Huarui, found that livestock feed provided by Xinxin Mingjing company contained melamine.

Both companies are based in the northeastern province of Liaoning. AFP

A YOUNG Pakistan survivor holds her ill sisters on Oct. 31 as she waits for assistance in one of the villages hit by a 6.4-magnitude quake. AP

Diseases break out in Pakistan quake zone

AWAN, PAKISTAN—HUNDREDS of children left homeless by a devastating earthquake in southwestern Pakistan are suffering from potentially life-threatening diarrhoea and pneumonia, a health official said on Friday.

The outbreak of disease comes two days after up to 300 people were killed and scores more were injured by the 6.4-magnitude earthquake in the province's Baluchistan province.

"Due to the cold hundreds of children are being treated for pneumonia, abdominal diseases, diarrhea and chest problems," the district health officer of the children hill town of Ziarat, Ayub Kakar, said.

He said there was still a shortage of vital items, blankets and clothes for people sleeping in the open in villages near Ziarat, as temperatures plunged below zero as winter sets in.

"We fear the death toll will rise. Such diseases, if not treated in time, are life-threatening," Kakar said, adding that there was a shortage of medicines and ambulances in the region.

He said children formed the majority of the population in the area, estimating that between 25,000 and 30,000 of them were affected.

"Many women have not been taken to local dispensaries and hospitals because of the conservative society. That's why we are sending out teams to them to the affected areas to treat women and children," Kakar said.

Many children were also psychologically affected by the quake, he said.

The Pakistani military said it had provided tents, blankets and food to some 25,000 affected people in the devastated village of Pitao, Tezgi and Gogi, with another 15,000 set to get relief goods here Friday.

The International Committee of the Red Cross had sent 5,000 relief kits, each consisting of one tent and 15 days' rations for a family of five. AFP

More lawsuits filed over tainted milk in China

BEIJING—THREE FAMILIES WITH babies suffering kidney problems filed separate lawsuits on Wednesday against one of China's largest milk companies, lawyers representing the families said. They are the latest lawsuits to be filed in the tainted-milk scandal, China's worst food-safety episode in years.

The lawsuits demand compensation from the milk company, Sanlu Group, and were filed in the northern city of Shijiazhuang, where Sanlu is based.

The milk scandal and the lawsuits are politically fraught, and so far no judge has agreed to hear a case in court. At least three other lawsuits had been filed before Wednesday.

President Hu Jintao's state-run China Central Television reported Wednesday that Sanlu's chairwoman, Tian Wenhua, had been fired, and that Sanlu's parent company had also dismissed its vice president and the head of its dairy division.

Sanlu announced a nationwide recall in early September.

Since then, a wide range of tainted products from China have been discovered in Asia, Europe and North America, including cheese made with milk products, like yogurt and binders, prompting countries around the world to recall Chinese-made food products.

Many lawsuits against companies that produced or sold the tainted milk products have been filed, raising the possibility that chicken feed was also being doctored in Hong Kong, government officials reported last Wednesday finding another batch of eggs imported from mainland China that have tested for high levels of melamine. The tainted eggs came days after two other batches were reported. The tainted batches from three different provinces in China.

Senior government officials and company executives have been fired in the scandal that widened, and dozens of people suspected of being involved illegally using melamine have been arrested. AFP

17 hurt by Spanish university car bomb

MADRID—A CAR BOMB EXploded in a University of Navarre car park in northern Spain on Thursday, slightly wounding 17 people, after a warning call in the name of Basque separatist rebels ETA, the government said.

Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba said a telephone call in the name of Basque separatist rebels ETA an hour before the blast had warned of a car bomb left in a university.

But while the caller identified the make and color of the vehicle in the car exactly the same—a red pickup—failed to warn people in the Basque Country regional capital Vitoria.

The University of Navarre is in the city of Pamplona.

"The result is that we could have had a terrible tragedy in the University of Navarre," Rubalcaba told a news conference.

A pall of smoke billowed over the flaming wreckage of the vehicle used for the bomb, which detonated at around 11 a.m., shattering nearby university windows as students ran in fear.

The blast came just two days after Spanish police arrested four suspected ETA guerrillas they said had been planning attacks in the Navarre region.

ETA has killed more than 800 people in four decades of armed struggle for independence of ancient Basque territories in Spain and France, including Navarre.

Authorities blamed the separatists for two bomb attacks which caused no casualties over the weekend in the Basque Country. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE

RP archers nails 2 more golds /A20

Posey helps Hornets eclipse Suns/A21

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

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WINNER AGAIN Robert Pactolerin coaxes a long birdie putt on the 18th hole. He carded for par.

Lunas fails WBA title bid

By Salvacion G. Lagumbay, Contributor

FILIPINO BOLLY LUNAS FAILED IN HIS BID to win the WBA bantamweight title yesterday after he was handily defeated by reigning champion Anselmo "Chemito" Moreno yesterday in Panama City.

According to a report by Philboxing.com correspondent Carlos Costa, who was at ringside for the fight, Moreno (24-1-1) "won decisively (on) one round and (was) accurate for the evening over Filipino fighter."

The title fight headlined the "Rookie de Panamá" card held at the Centro de Convenciones Figali off the Panama Canal on Thursday (Friday morning in Manila).

There were no knockdowns during the fight, although the Panamanian was declared the unanimous winner by wide margins of 119-109, 116-110 and 120-106.

This was Moreno's second title defense of the WBA crown he won over erstwhile unbeaten Ukrainian Vladimir Sidorenko (21-1-1) in Shizuoka City last May 31.

Lunas (25-7-1), who hails from Silay, remains the ONE bantamweight champion.

Pactolerin gets job done, at last

Ex-RP Open winner ends long drought

By Manong R. Castillo

TRUE MARTYRES, CAVITE—ONE WOULD THINK THAT AFTER GOING through so many hard times and enduring a very long rank, Robert Pactolerin would do something special after the round to announce his return to the winners' circle.

"More than 2 years! I've wanted to say something, but I am a veteran and today's just another day for me," Pactolerin said in Filipino yesterday, comments after holing out for a routine par that capped a flawless four-under-68 and his first victory in 11 years.

Pactolerin, who penned a two-stroke victory, managed to stick grim as he acknowledged the cheers of a small gallery at the close of the ICTSI Riverwood Hills Challenge here.

Pactolerin picked up two shots after his first nine holes and left his young fighterness rooting done. The 37-year-old former Philippine Open winner and two-time SP Masters champ then trained home for the P164,000 top prize with a 54-hole, nine-under 207 tally.

Gene Bondoc and Sherwin Dumandan, who both used soft just a stroke behind Pactolerin, Bondoc nearly and never recovered, turning in identical 73s to finish in a seventh-place tie with Angelo Que at 215.

Que, the reigning SP Open champion, finally marked par with a 68.

"I am very happy to win for myself, for my wife and friends who have stuck with me all these years," said Pactolerin, who was happy-free in his last 30 holes, which he played at seven under.

Not only did the long drought stalk Pactolerin one of his earnings and push him to reaching, but a costly triple-bogey operation on his wife Jane two years ago, made them truly hard for him.

"I never lost confidence, even during the winless spell," he said.

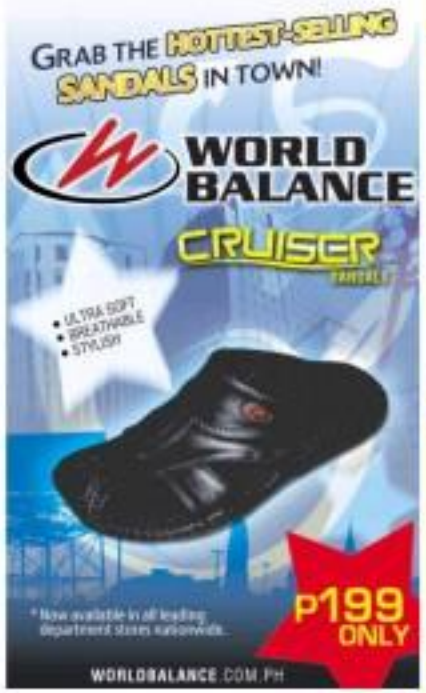
Other Salvador observed out a final-day charge that fell just short, shooting a 66 to claim joint second at 208 with amateur star and fellow Dasmariñas Pradio Asanza, the pre-tourney SP team spearhead who fired 69.

Salvador, five shots off the pace overnight, rallied with an eagle-3 on the short 13th before gunning down a birdie on the next to stay in touch with Pactolerin.

Jay Bayron, the first-round leader, and Richard Sinthaga fashioned out a 72 and a 68, respectively, to share fourth spot at 213.

Arnero, meanwhile, had a shot at repeating what 80 years buddy Rufino Bayron pulled off at the Valley top last month. But the rock-solid Pactolerin didn't give him any room to some closer.

Pactolerin picked up a deer sight on his first hole by draining a 12-footer and executing pars with the poise of a champion in the three times he got to TOUNG.



DE LA HOYA

Hoya forms 'Dream Team' for Pacquiao fight

By Francis TJ. Ochoa

ONCE-IN-LA-HOYA-OUTING TOGETHER: a "Dream Team" of sorts in his corner.

Already running under a Hall of Famer, the Golden Boy booked up yet another ring legend in Angelo Dundee, who will act as a consultant for De La Hoya's corner for the Dec. 6 bout against Filipino ring sensation Manny Pacquiao at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The tie-up was revealed Thursday in a special press event attended by De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, which is co-promoting what is expected to be the year's biggest ring showdown.

Dundee, a Hall of Fame trainer who has worked with 23 world champions—including such greats as Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard and George Foreman—told reporters during the media conference that the deal allowed him to work with yet another boxing great also headed for the Hall of Fame.

"After working with Ali and Leonard, I think it's only fitting that I now get the chance to work with the most important fighter of this era," Dundee was quoted by ESPN's Dan Rafael on saying. Thursday. "This fight against Pacquiao is the biggest fight boxing has seen in years and I'm excited to be a part of it and to help lead Oscar to victory."

De La Hoya already inked Nacho Beristain as his chief trainer, but the 87-year-old Dundee will help out in plotting strategies against the Pacman, who is acknowledged as the world's best pound-for-pound fighter.

While having the two trainers may be a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth, Dundee could help still give way in Beristain's absence for the fight.

"They'll dictate the role, but whatever is necessary I will do," Dundee said. "I will speak with De La Hoya and Nacho, but I am not a guy who pushes. I'm there to help. I'm not there to win anybody up."

E. Bilena out to get title back

GAMES NOV. 1
7 Ateneo Cardio Pump Club
1 p.m.—Opening ceremony
2 p.m.—Pilipinas vs Sarimas Centre
4 p.m.—Rain Or Shine vs Cardinal Cafe

By Jasmine W. Payo

NO LESS THAN reigning UAAP Most Valuable Player Marichu Bilena will pace Ateneo Blue Eagles' quest to reclaim the Women's Philippine Basketball League crown.

"We hope to defend the championship after almost a decade," said Ateneo Lifebasa coach Shaneah Aquino. "We're not exactly pressured, but we're actually very excited that the WPBL has finally been revived."

Ever Bilena, which captured the title in 1999 before the first season's commercial stint league closed shop, will bank on the core of the University of Santo Tomas Tigresses led by Shasha and Beth Bautista.

Julie Amos, who helped lead Ever Bilena's last title run, will serve as assistant mentor.

Aquino picked Oracle Residences—which topped UAAP champion Far Eastern University in its pasture school—as the top contender when the league embarks on two it as the Ateneo Sports Center in Ortigas City.

But Oracle-FEU coach Mike Oliver said his team has yet to wax a complete practice.

"We're still finalizing the line-up because of the team," noted Oliver during the lineup session yesterday at Ateneo's Padre Faura.

Oliver said several Lady Tamaraws saw action in the University Games in Dumaguete City, while five key players suited up for the Philippine youth team in the Fiba-Asia under-18 tournament in Medan, Indonesia.

Oracle-FEU will be powered by Hernadinne Mercado, Cherie Borja, Love Ming-ano, Raina Palmares, JL Sevial, Jodie Pontino and top rookie pick Carmina Laquindanum of National University.

RP nails 2 more golds

Filipinos dominate Asean archery tilt with six titles

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE PHILIPPINES SWAPPED UP ITS CAMPAIGN with one more gold medals in the team competition yesterday and dominated the 2008 Southeast Asian Archery Federation Championships on the Ateneo campus field.

Men's individual recurve champion Ian Wayne Larson powered the 10-pin to the men's team crown, while rookie sensation Kristina Bautista led the women's compound squad in the Philippines collected a total of six gold, four silver and five bronze medals in the two-day tourney.

Larson teamed up with Marvin Cordero and Paul de la Cruz in overwhelming Myanmar's Zaw Win Hpkin, Yan Aung Soe and Ngaa Myo Aung, 300-198, in the 6-18 rounds of men's recurve team competition.

Bautista, who earlier secured two bronze medals in the individual compound, combined with shotgun Tiu Angan and Arlene Udtuan in the team event to down another stacked SF trailer at the all-Filipino finals.

"It was an exciting match because the archers were closely distributed," the 20-year-old Bautista said after her group capped the 10-spot harnessed by former Olympian Jennifer Chan, Quintin Gillapantan and Geraldine Cabral at 215-209.

Bautista and company pulled ahead, 218-116, in the penultimate stretch, before sealing their victory with a 56-53 score in the fourth and final end.

The Philippines, though, settled for a silver in the women's recurve as Rachelle and Maria Francisca Cabral and Joanne Tabaling bowed to Indonesia's Ika Yuliana Rochmawati, Nurdan Safitri and Riduan Sesia, 102-104.

Gridlar Larson, Earl Benjamin Yap failed to pull off a double-gold victory after his crew wound up third in the men's compound team event.

Yap, who captured the gold in the men's individual compound a day earlier, barely secured the bronze with Christian Cobillo and Rosendo Sombero after edging Indonesia's Pandhita Gani Wiratara, Rusmaniloso and Andyanto Putra at 225-220.

Vietnam clinched the gold in the men's compound with Tran Cuong Nguyen, Vu Phan Ha and Thanh Phan Nguyen posting a 224-220 decision over Malaysia's Mohd Hen Bin Long Rong Ting and Pah Rim bin.

THE MEN'S recurve team of Ian Wayne Larson, Marvin Cordero and Paul dela Cruz (from left) savour their victory.

Arellano Chiefs make case for NCAA inclusion

ARELLANO UNIVERSITY, THE SOUTH-to-back National Capital Region Athletic Association champions, is ready to join the Nationwide Collegiate Athletic Association.

Ali Cayco, Arellano's vice president for marketing who personally handles the school's athletic program, yesterday said the Chiefs are equipped in meeting all the requirements needed to become the 4th joint-old NCAA's eighth member for next year.

"We're ready," said Cayco, noting that the Chiefs have been riding the field not only in the NCRAA, but also in the Fr. Martin Cup as the team also took fourteen Cup and Division II Cup champions.

Mentored by Leo Isaac, the Legarda-based dribblers, sublegal UAAP powerhouse Far Eastern University 64-56, in last month's finals to clinch their third title in the Fr. Martin Cup.

And result that as handwashing play-ers like Orlando Baraya, Adrian Cabala, Ian Cabarrus, Jordan Mabasa, Leonard Sequilla, Jerome Aguanta and Bernard del Rosario.

"All we want is respect. I'm sure they've wanted to notice us right now," said Isaac, a former Gilas star who coaches the Mapua Cardinals in the NCAA as well.

The NCAA has opened the door for us and hope our case was treated by Philippine Christian U. which took an indefinitely leave of absence for next season.

Donaire could get it in the neck on Sunday

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

ONE GLIMPSE AT THE RIBBON FOR of world flyweight boxing champ Nonito Donaire in Las Vegas on Sunday and the anxious Pinoy fight fan worries is relieved.

Yes, pictures could be deceiving, but how do they keep the taut, extended neck of mandatory challenger Mexico Mihalmo from nothing through his collar?

More than the biceps, the size and shape of the fan, a boxer's neck speaks volumes about his overall makeup.

* * *

If eyes are windows to a man's soul, the neck is the cup of a boxer's capacity and guts.

Through this, you could readily tell if a pugilist is, say, a booty-warrior or a dancing and elusive counter-tactician.

This part of the body that connects the head to the shoulders could also help tell whether this or that boxer is a raging bull or an opponent-tease.

* * *

Now, this is not to say that Mihalmo should be home-off doing his thing with a collar to spare.

But it's a boxing championship, not a race where the length of home's head and neck are a measure of his lead and possible success.

Will Mihalmo, who has lost only once (12-1, 11 KOs) *he* reels deep in trouble zone fight time at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino on Saturday (Sunday in Manila)?

* * *

Pardon the pun but, who knows. Donaire (28-1, 12 KOs), turning 26 later this month, could himself get it in the neck—executive nerves positioned—if he fails to show up a knocked percent for his second title defense?

There's the danger of Donaire clocking in with some rust, as he had fought only once since clobbering the seemingly indestructible Vic Darchinyan more than a year ago.

Mihalmo, for his part, has never fought outside of South Africa.

* * *

Trainer Donaire, last being hailed as the Filipino Floyd, "Mihalmo probably hopes he can take my punches. He has a lot of stamina, and he also throws a ton of punches."

How does he hope to upend the fight?

"It's either my hand breaks or his face breaks," Donaire declares.

"He's tough from what I've seen, but he's shorter than me," adds the 5-foot-7 Donaire.

* * *

Anyway, Donaire has also been dubbed the right-handed Hook Flonde, the ring immortal from Cuba who ruled the world 1389-91 division for seven years.

Going further back, it's worth mentioning that Hook had one of his asses trying nights at the Aramita Coliseum—whose inauguration in March 1960 was punctuated by his stoppage of Randell Cooper in the seventh round—against an African toy tiger.

The name of Hal Mickens ring resonance is Love Always.

There was this popular view, now half-forgotten, that Hook's was on the verge of losing against Albany made like a stoned-off shotgun, when referee Benny Valenzuela snapped the bout.

* * *

Wow, there was bedlam, the boxing ring was gripped by an instant stampede, as the disqualified African orga-nized and chased Valenzuela.

A picture by Ben Rosse of that up-heaval, a drowsy gun at Sonia menacingly, used to hang on the lobby of the old Manila Times on Plaridel Times Street off Chinatown.

Years what I remember, Flonde was on the verge of losing that one when the fight was stopped," recalled sportsman Rudy Salud, among the boxing greats-in-English.

* * *

It has remained unclear whether or not Alfonso, the unsolved-off diagnosis, had used both hand and bat to daze Flonde.

Now, informed about the shape and size of Donaire's fan this Saturday, Salud insisted there definitely would be no brilliant clarity like Philippine Flash's second title defense in Las Vegas.

Ronnie Mihalmo, the mandatory challenger, appears a lot more like a brawler, and the reckless James Gupney type.

Donaire, needless to say is also dedicating his fight, to the great Gabriel Flonde.

And, as broadcast superhero Joe Cantada loved to say: Keep pondin', you there.

Happy Halloween!

NBP NATIONAL development program project director Rajko Toroman makes the ceremonial toss launching the NBTC tournament.

8 Luzon teams join D-League

EIGHT FOUR-TEAMS FROM LUZON TOOK the spotlight at the kickoff ceremony of the National Basketball Training Center (NBTC) D-League recently at the Philsports arena.

NBTC director Eric Altamirano said the league, a 14-and-under grassroots program backed by Nabisco, may serve as a talent pool for the national youth team as well as the varsity squads in the UAAP and NCAA.

"NBTC's vision is to build a basketball program that serves as a model for Philippine sports," Altamirano said during the opening ceremony graced by top sports officials led by Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas project director Rajko Toroman.

"The league also aims to contribute to nation building by developing the core values necessary to create the greatest generation of Filipino youth. Core values such as love for country, passion for the game, integrity, leadership and commitment to excellence."

A total of 29 teams were formed through talent-identification camps across the country.

Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will field eight teams each, while the National Capital Region will parade five squads in the boys division.

A separate tournament for girls will be launched by February 2009.

SPORTSWATCH

'Bakbakan' derby stakes P20M at MC

BICYCLE DERBY FANATICS HEAD FOR the Makati Coliseum on Monday when the 1700-million SINGE National Bakbakan Ultra Derby gets going.

Competition at the venue, also set on Nov. 3, 10, 12 and 17, is open to all breeders affiliated with the National Federation of Gamefowl Breeders.

Breeders-cum-spectators will also be staged on Monday at the Ortigas-pa Coliseum for members of the BCRA, GSBF and Taglia, on Nov. 4 at the Pasig Square Garden; and on Nov. 7 at the Pasay City Cockpit.

The number of entries have reached 650 after only 17 elimination rounds in the provinces, according to the NFBC.

Executive director Jerry Asuncion attributed the huge turnout to NFGB's track record in staging fair derbies. This year's slogan is "Eden Buon ting Laban."

The 2008 "Bakbakan" looms as the biggest ever in terms of guaranteed prize and the number of required entries, which could top the 1,000-mark.

Backing the super singlets are Best Bet, Thunderbird Feeds, Purina Feeds, Wushwush Shampoo, meryl 500, Keyong Guns Gaiters, Hagilis 88, Supremo Feeds, Bellevel Vitamix, Seven Paragon, B-Flex, Cobra Energy Drink and Isabela Mineral Water.

286 fights at Cainta today

A TOTAL OF 208 HIGH-TECH CHAMPIONSHIP BOUTS slated for the Metropolitan Boxing Federation's 6-Step Derby starting at 8 a.m. today at the 7,000-seat Cainta Gymnasium in Cainta, Rizal.

The fight program features entries from Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Cavite, Bicol, Quezon, Batangas, Laguna and Manila.

Besides the regular Metropolitan Derby ring series, which began in the first week of October, there is a grand total of 286 entries.

The winners will receive appreciation prizes worth P500 each.

Dallas goes really big for All-star weekend

DALLAS — THE NBA ALL-STAR GAME IS coming to the new Dallas Cowboys stadium in 2010 and plenty of good seats are available — except Feb. 13 (ESPN).

Living up to the old adage about doing things bigger in Texas, the Dallas Mavericks and NFL Cowboys are collaborating on hosting next season's showcase event. It will be among the first major events at the soon-to-be-completed, $1.1 billion facility in Arlington.

And, if all goes according to plan, this event will set the record for the largest crowd ever to watch an NBA game, shattering the mark of 44,735 set at the 1989 All-Star Game, not-to-coincidentally held at another Texas-sized venue, the Houston Astrodome.

"It's totally outrageous," NBA commissioner David Stern said.

The 2010 All-Star weekend is being hyped as a rendezvous between teams and cities. Some events will be held at the Dallas Convention Center, with the Mavericks' arena hosting the zenith game on the Friday and the Saturday festivities, which include the 3-point and dunk contests.

The marquee game will be on the Sunday, with events roster right at midfield of the football stadium.

"We've got complete flexibility with the configurations," Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said. "That's what we spent a lot of money on, to adapt it to these kinds of events."

Mavericks president Terdema Ussery said it took Stern four months to approve their proposal.

"I just wanted to make sure my guys didn't think it wasn't an event, and I didn't think it wasn't an event," Stern said.

The game will be on Feb. 14, 2010. This season's game will be in Phoenix. AP

DALLAS Mavericks forward-forward Antawn Wright (No. 21) passes around Houston Rockets owner Yao Ming (back). AP/1998

Posey helps Hornets eclipse Suns

LOS ANGELES — RECENT SIGNING Antonio Posey knocked down three crucial three-pointers in the final quarter to lift the New Orleans Hornets past the Phoenix Suns, 106-99, in NBA action on Thursday.

The veteran swingman was acquired as a free agent in the offseason from the NBA champion Boston Celtics to provide the Hornets with extra defense and clutch shooting.

Morris Peterson scored a game-high 21 points, while Chris Paul and Peja Stojakovic added 20 apiece to give the Hornets a 2-0 start to the season.

"Coming here (to New Orleans) is a great opportunity with what this team has done in the past years," Posey said respectfully. "It's a great opportunity to win again."

Steve Nash paced the Suns with 24 points and nine assists, while Amare Stoudemire had 23 and 12 rebounds for Phoenix, which fell to 1-1.

Trailing most of the game, the Suns pulled to within 83-80 with seven minutes left in the game before Posey hit the first of his long-range bombs.

Posey nailed another three-pointer two minutes later to push the Hornets' lead to 92-83. New Orleans made 23 three-pointers in an impressive display of perimeter shooting.

"We showed a lot of fight tonight," Paul said. "We tried to show our identity early and play as a team, and it's showing up now."

In Dallas, Jos Ming and Dan Arnon powered Houston's strong finish as the Rockets beat the Dallas Mavericks, 113-102, spoiling the debut of new Dallas coach Rick Carlisle.

Yao finished with 30 points and 13 rebounds, and Arnon scored 25 points. He had seven points in the decisive 36-2 points run, which began with the game tied 92-92 in the final quarter. Along the way, he also showed his allegiance to his new teammate.

After Yao was fouled hard and caught a late elbow from Dallas' Josh Howard, arnon rushed between Yao and Howard. Officials gave Arnon a technical foul.

Yao said an official, "He was trying to separate us." The new teammates walked away slapping hands.

The Mavericks got within eight points in the final minutes, and looked like closing the deficit further when Erik Sowell knocked a layup by Houston's Aaron Brooks. However the German missed the same-and 1-2 free throw at the other end and the result was never in doubt again.

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 20 points as the Cavaliers won their home opener by doubling the Charlotte Bobcats, 96-79.

Daniel Gibson had 20 of his 23 points in the first half when Cleveland opened a 17-point level. The Cavaliers spoiled well-traveled stands Larry Brown's debut with the defeat. Reuters, AP

Bush lauds World Series champions

WASHINGTON — PRESIDENT George W. Bush called the president-elect of the Philadelphia Phillies to congratulate the National League team on winning this year's World Series.

White House spokesperson Dana Perino said Bush talked to David Montgomery, the Phillies' president, on Thursday. She said he "offered his congratulations and said how exciting it must be for him, the team, and for all of the fans."

Perino said Bush also noted that Phillies manager Charlie Manuel had brought some of the players by the White House last year, and said he was "really impressed" by them. She said Bush asked Montgomery "to give Charlie and the entire organization his best."

Bush was a contributing owner of the Americus League's Texas Rangers from 1989-94. AP

Eagles collect one more hoop trophy

By Cedrik P. Tapas

LOS MAGISTE CITY — IN A NEAR-MINUTE with achievements, chalk one more up for the Ateneo Blue Eagles.

The reigning UAAP champions secured a comprehensive 99-67 triumph over Emilio Aguinaldo College Thursday night to claim their first Philippine Nationals University Games men's basketball title at the Ramon Magsaysay Cultural Center Manila Sports and Cultural Center.

Eric Salamat finished with 15 points and had four steals to lead a big run for leading the second and third periods that turned an early 21-24 deficit into a commanding 73-42 lead heading into the final 10 minutes.

The win gave the Eagles their fourth title in the past 11 months, counting the Philippine Collegiate Champions League in December last year and the Nike Summer League last May.

"It's a great experience for our players as we build up for next season," said Ateneo assistant coach Sandy Arespacochaga, who was given a free hand by head coach Norman Black in calling the shots for the Eagles in this year meeting backed by the Philippine Sports Commission.

"They got to play everyday for a month and were exposed to different styles of play that will come in handy in the UAAP."

The Eagles were duly recognized as every game stomp of the tournament with Salamat named Most Valuable Player.

Five other players scored in double figures for Ateneo with defensive guard Fesan Member posting 12 points on top of five steals, Chris Standfrog contributing 11 markers and rookies Ryan Buenafe, Justin Chua and Nico Salva adding 10 apiece.

Over at the Wilson de Ayia, University of Santo Tomas overpowered University of the Philippines, 25-23, 25-12, 25-19, for

SALAMAT

MONFORT

the men's volleyball crown.

Pamantikan Unicersity capped men's beach volleyball with a 21-16, 21-9 rounding of UST in the 16 Perdices Stadium, while the Ramon Magsaysay Cultural Center hosted the women's title at the expense of University of the East, 23-25, 24-22.

College of St. Benilde grabbed the men's chess crown, while University of Baguio co-Montal Barcelona ruled the women's crown in Benilde's elite-ruled tourney's fields and courts.

Hotel Technological University emerged as the top school with four titles, highlighted by a sweep of the taekwondo competitions. RTU also won women's athletics and men's swimming.

Ateneo collected three titles, including women's swimming and women's tennis.

Hamilton targeted by racist website

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL — FORMULA One title favorite Lewis Hamilton has been the target of racist messages on a Web site aimed at promoting his failure in the decisive Brazilian Grand Prix on Sunday.

The Web site pirelaralonsohamilton.com (or Beyne Hamilton's Three) asks visitors to place images of pain, insults and perceptions on the Italian's track to try to keep F1's first black driver from finishing Sunday's decisive race.

Visitors are invited to "leave a message to Hamilton," and many of them are full of racism and obscenities.

The Web site says, in Spanish, that "Hamilton cannot finish the race" and that "We want Hamilton to lose."

Fernando Dias's governing body condemned the Web site, according to Brazilian media, saying that it is against any act of "discrimination and prejudice."

FIA this year launched an anti-racism campaign after Spanish fans taunted Hamilton during testing in Spain.

Hamilton enters the final race of the year with a chance to win his first title and become F1's youngest champion at age 23. He has a seven-point advantage over Ferrari's Brazilian driver Felipe Massa. AP

Baguio tabs youth badminton semis slot

DARREL BAGUIO OF ATTEC ALVIN UNDERhand his teams as the participant in four as he hosted out Carmelo Lumod of MEL.JR., 21-7, 21-15, in the quarterfinals of the 8-under boys' singles division in the Tobys Dunlop 6th Youth Badminton Championships yesterday at the West Drive Badminton court.

The tournament favorite duo zoomed to the semifinals, where he will face 10th seed Joaquin Lazaro of MEL.JR.

Lazaro made it to the Final Four by upsetting ninth-seed Ole Velasco of WWCBA, 21-18, 21-13, in the single knock-out affair presented by Toby's Sports and Dunlop and finished by Inquirer.net, Solar Sports, CS Sports, Thomas, Yellow Cab and Shakeys.

The other half of the Final Four will have Ryala Inguito of Asian/RampEcab challenging MSC.BC's Alec Nicole Bermudo.

Angelica earned a shot at a finals slot by ousting Rafael Reinnes of WWCBA, 21-6, 21-14, while Bermudo took out Earl Bass of WWCBA, 21-8, 21-4.

In the boys doubles action in the 8-under division, the pair of Bass and Velasco turned back the tandem of Lumod and Cruz, 21-9, 21-10, to advance into the semi-round.

Nicole Gruon, Toby's sports marketing supervisor, meanwhile announced the singing of a pilot contract for all amateur players-players. Please stay on log on sewatoby's.com for complete details.

In the girls' singles action in the 8-under division, top pick Aldreen Concepcion of Asian trounced Meghan Cruz of AC Integrated, 21-5, 21-16, to also advance into the semifinals.

Also making the semifinals were Lizette Alvarez of Phoenix, Alfred Ros Superior of MSC.JR. and Brittnea Dinnah Villanueva of MEL.JR.

ROGER Federer of Switzerland strips a return vs Mario Ciric of Croatia.

Nadal, Federer book Paris quarterfinal tickets

PARIS — RAFAEL NADAL AND ROGER Federer rolled into the Paris Masters quarterfinals without the ousted Novak Djokovic on Thursday.

Fourth-seeded Andy Murray, Andy Roddick, defending champion David Nalbandian and 2006 winner Nikolay Davydenko also made the last eight.

Roddick claimed the ninth spot in the eight-man Masters Cup in Shanghai next month, leaving Juan Martin del Potro and Gilles Simon waiting on Friday's results to see if they keep the last two berths.

Nadal beat Gael Monfils of France, 6-3, 6-2, Federer defeated Mario Ciric, 6-3, 6-4, while Djokovic, the year's sole-ever major winner, lost to 3rd-Wilfried Tsonga of France, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Nadal saved all nine break points he faced and broke Monfils three times, clinching victory on his first match point when the Frenchman hit a forehand wide.

"I'm not playing my best level, but I'm not playing badly," Nadal said. "If I can improve a bit for tomorrow and for Shanghai I think I can finish the year playing well."

Nadal will play Davydenko, who crushed 2005 champ Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-2.

Tsonga, though Nadal was guaranteed to start 2009 ahead of Federer in the rankings, he feels like he's still behind him.

"Roger had four or five years with the No. 1, winning wins, three Grand Slams a year," Nadal said. "So for that reason I think everybody says Federer is the best."

Federer's fourth are ended a dominant win over 20-year-old Ciric, and followed him to start an eye on his first semifinals at Henry Indoor Arena.

"I prefer to come back to a place where I had success in the past. This is not the case here," Federer.

He'll have to go through James Blake, who defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany, 6-4, 6-4.

Federer is 8-1 against Blake, with the Swiss star's only loss in the quarterfinals at the Beijing Olympics.

"I'm not the overnight type, but I would be pleased to beat him," Federer said. AP

SPORTS

Murakami three off pace after a 72

JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA—FILIPINO DEFENDING CHAMPION Antonio Murakami endured a frustrating even par 72 Friday and fell three strokes off the pace set by Australian Mitchell Brown halfway through the Asian Tour's Iskandar Johor Open.

Murakami, the Filipino sportsbrand in the tournament he used to fearlessly break through the Tour (Continued on A12)

Cuban coach sees Olympic boxing medal

By Dennis U. Erea, Inquirer Libre

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO—DISAPPOINTED over the country's failure to win a medal at an international youth boxing meet here, Cuban head coach Dagoberto Rojas Sosa said he is willing to give up a limb if the Philippine fists can get a medal in the 2012 London Olympics.

"I am very sad but I am not blaming any of boxers," said the 43-year-old Sosa in Spanish as the tournament's official handlers after light flyweight Gerwin Sierra and featherweight Rolando Tecson were eliminated in the First International Boxing Association (AIBA) Youth World Championships Tuesday.

"Filipinos can challenge the best of the world but they lack experience," Sosa added. "Give your boxers international exposure and they will not go empty-handed in London."

Sosa said he would decapitate himself if the boxers bombed out in the next Olympics.

Assistant coach Elmer Orozco, who acted as interpreter, said tournament officials were surprised at the start of the singlun when the Filipinos presented their blue books, which served as the records of competing boxers.

"They could not believe that our boxers had no prior bouts before competing in the worlds," Orozco said. "Most of the competing boxers boast of five or more foreign stints before coming here."

Sosa said that ideally the nationals should be trained two years before sending us ten to the world youth meet. The nationals actually trained for 22 days in Cuba and were under heat for five months at their training camp in Baguio City.

"They cheered against very well in Cuba, but they boxed differently here," lamented Sosa.

MURAKAMI Practicing round

IN THIS ISSUE
- SMIC gets P27B from sale of 11% stake in San Miguel /B2

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Martens

IN THIS ISSUE
- DA scrapping fertilizer program /B2

Forex stock down to $2.7B in Sept.

BSP used $10B to prop up peso, pay debt

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS' FOREIGN EXchange stock outside of its official foreign reserves had dwindled by $870 million in September following severe global shocks that emanated from Wall Street.

Based on the central bank's latest report, foreign exchange-backed spot foreign currency swaps and not yet booked as part of the country's gross international reserves (GIR) had been reduced further to $2.69 billion as end-September, the lowest so far this year, from $3.56 billion the previous month.

The BSP has been selling US dollars heavily to temper the peso's sharp depreciation since March this year. It has been intervening at the foreign exchange market while conserving its GIR. As a result, the foreign exchange swaps have since decreased from an all-time high of about $13 billion recorded in January to February this year.

According to the latest report, the central bank has so far unloaded about $10 billion from the foreign currency swaps this year either to flush US dollars into the spot foreign exchange market or service some of its liabilities. Currency dealers said that in recent months, the central bank would provide liquidity to the foreign exchange market whenever the peso sharply depreciated during intra-day trade.

Over the last two years, the BSP used the foreign exchange swaps as a tool to mop up excess foreign exchange purchased from the Philippine Dealing System. These swaps refer to US dollars bought by the BSP from the open foreign exchange market and swapped for pesos to siphon off excess foreign exchange in the financial system that could otherwise push up inflation by encouraging consumer spending.

So far this month of September alone, about $312 million worth of foreign portfolio investments to fund stocks, bonds and bank products flowed out of the country—the worst such outflow seen so far this year.

It was in mid-September when "shell-forex sector up to Wall Street hit by venerable investment banks gone—Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy while Merrill Lynch was sold to Bank of America. At the same time, the biggest US insurance firm, American International Group, teetered on the brink. AIG received an $85-billion bailout from the Reserve Bank of New York. The turmoil on Wall Street brought global mar-

TURN TO B3

CURRENCIES

OCTOBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P48.84 =

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 4.6% higher

SHARE PRICE YESTERDAY CLOSED 4.6 percent higher as investors hunted for bargains, dealers said.

The composite index surged 86.38 points to close at 1,961.06.

The main index has risen 13.5 percent in the last three days after touching a four-year low Tuesday. A total of 1.48 billion shares worth P35.87 billion ($678.2 million) changed hands.

Banners led losers, 66 to 10, while 32 issues closed unchanged. AFP

In securing vital loans, stick to ODA, gov't urged

By Michelle V. Ramos

ECONOMIC PLANNING SECRETARY RALPH Recto said the government would do well to tap more official development assistance from China and other bilateral lenders than secure commercial loans, citing rising interest rates brought about by the global financial turmoil.

China, with an estimated trillion dollars in reserves, offers relatively cheaper loans, making it a good source of ODA, Recto said.

ODAs normally carry an annual interest rate of only 2 or 3 percent compared with commercial loans, which cost twice or three times as much.

"We have to improve our relations with China, which is the biggest lender to the Triple-E (Estero 2) [the Philippines] can get concessional loans from China, why not do so," Recto said, when asked about his policy move on loan agreements with China.

The economic planning chief said that, although some China-funded projects in the past were tainted with corruption issues, these should not stop the Philippines from seeking loans from the Chinese government.

The most controversial of these turned projects was the $329-million national broadband project. It was supposed to be funded by a loan from the Chinese government and implemented by Chinese firm ZTE Corp. The project was canceled amid allegations of corruption.

Recto agreed that government agencies

SEE ECONOMIC B3

Bankers ratify measures to shield RP from global crisis

MEMBERS OF THE BANKERS ASSOciation of the Philippines yesterday ratified three "unprecedented, self-restraint" measures endorsed by their leaders to support the central bank's efforts to protect the domestic economy from escalating external shocks.

"We have adopted three resolutions all meant to further increase liquidity, the oil of the economic engine, and keep the economy strong amid current external challenges and position it for the recovery of the global economy," BAP president Aurelio Montinola III said yesterday.

Montinola, who is also president of Bank of the Philippine Islands, said the three measures were needed to further "step down the economy and keep it humming until it is time to rev it up."

BAP executive director Lucrecia Cornel added the consumers would take effect immediately until Jan. 31 this year.

The banking community on Thursday agreed to:

- Require BAP members to release more dollars into the system by holding only half the amount of foreign exchange or "overbought" position they are allowed to keep (currently at $50 million, or 20 percent of computed capital, whichever is lower);
- Require (another) banks to limit dollar sales meant for outward investment while making available all dollars needed for foreign direct investment into the country; and,
- Encourage banks to lend more actively among themselves through an interbank lending facility backed by government securities, to make sure every bank has access to funds.

"These measures are needed, although Philippine economic fundamentals are sound and our banking system is well-capitalized and functioning normally," Montinola said. "We have to prepare because we know that the financial storm that started in the United States has spread to Europe and is now reaching Asia and the Philippines." Doris C. Dumlao

SMIC gets ₱27B from sale of 11% stake in San Miguel

Increase in CCT fund sought

By Michelle V. Remo

GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC MANAGERS are planning to increase the ₱6 billion fund earmarked for cash subsidies for poor families under the proposed 2009 budget.

Ralph Recto, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the ₱6 billion fund for the government's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program for next year could be raised to help more poor families cope with the difficulties created by the global financial turmoil.

Under the CCT program, the government, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development, grants cash allowances to selected poor families on the condition that they send their children to public schools and they regularly visit health centers.

The CCT program was started this year, with an initial funding of ₱300 million, amid the sharp increase in food and fuel prices, and the economic downturn that was feared to push more people into poverty.

Members of the government economic team discussed the matter the day the proposed increase in CCT budget for 2009. The team will meet soon to finalize the plan.

The plan will call for an amendment to the proposed ₱1.4-trillion national budget for 2009.

DA scrapping fertilizer program

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE plans to scrap its fertilizer subsidy program next year to make available more resources for organic farming.

"This intensified push for organic farming will focus next year on providing organic fertilizer–manufacturing support in intensive tilling 400,000 hectares, or 30 percent of the estimated 4 million hectares of palay farms nationwide," said Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap.

Yap said the move would cut the use of oil-based chemical fertilizers, the cost of which had more than doubled this year to ₱2,000 a bag from year-ago level.

The skyrocketing cost of fertilizers, which led to the 30-percent drop in the volume of synthetic fertilizers used this year—was cited as the main reason behind the expected drop in the production this year of major crops, such as rice and corn.

The Bureau of Agricultural Statistics expects palay output this year to reach only 16.9 million MT, short of the government target of 17.33 million MT.

Corn production—which was earlier expected to post an 18 percent growth to 7.96 million MT—is now seen to grow by only 4 percent to 7 million MT. Amy R. Remo

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. THE flagship conglomerate of retail tycoon Henry Sy, raised ₱27 billion from the sale of its 11 percent stake in San Miguel Corp. to San Miguel Brewhouses Plan yesterday.

SMIC, through lender-agent unit BDO Securities Inc., sold 209.34 million shares of San Miguel Class A shares at ₱89 per share.

"This has nothing to do with (the group's exposure to the R-control investments of Lehman Brothers. This is just to increase the true client of the SM Group," SMIC's top executive and BDO Securities' nominee Edgardo Francisco told the bourse.

BDO, which is 45-percent owned by SMIC, earlier said it lost ₱1.3 billion in the client's account due to provisions for the bank's exposure to troubled US financial giant Lehman Brothers.

SMIC vice president for investor relations Corazon Gutierrez said the sale was finalized at the stock market only yesterday, although the agreement between the two parties was reached in October last year.

The proceeds from the sale will further boost SMIC's war chest after a ₱350-million 3-year bond issue last July.

Jose T. Sio, SMIC's chief financial officer said in a statement: "SMIC is in a strong position to weather the global economic challenges. Being very liquid gives us the flexibility and the edge, not just to support our current businesses, but also to take advantage of extraordinary opportunities that may arise as times like this."

As of end-June 2008, the consolidated balance sheet—a gauge of total assets and obligations—of SMIC remained very strong and liquid with net debt of 66 percent or 66 centavos for every peso of equity and net debt of 16 percent or 16 centavos for every peso of assets. SMIC said these ratios would be further enhanced with the receipt of the payment for the San Miguel shares.

The stake represents at least one board seat in San Miguel.

Medusa to raise gold output of Co-O mine

By Amy R. Remo

MEDUSA MINING LTD. OF Australia expects to ramp up the gold output of its Co-O mine to as much as 60,000 ounces a year beginning 2009, following the completion of the first phase of mine expansion.

In a statement, Medusa said the Phase 1 expansion of the Agusan shaft at the Co-O gold mine in Agusan del Sur will be completed by the first quarter of 2009, or about three months ahead of schedule.

"Successful production increases are forecast in the coming quarters with the full benefit of the Phase 1 expansion to 60,000 ounces annualized production on track to flow through in the third quarter of 2009," the company said.

For fiscal year July 2008-June 2009, Medusa initially estimated gold production from the mine to reach only 38,000-45,000 ounces.

In the third quarter of 2008, the firm produced 6,988 ounces of gold.

Medusa operates the Co-O gold mine in partnership with local firm Philsaga Mining Corp. It owns 40 percent of the project with the local partner controlling 60 percent.

The resource base at the Co-O mine is 662,000 ounces while probable reserves stand at 249,000 ounces.

Forex stock down . . .

From page B1

story continues on next bright, exerting pressure on local currency, stock and bond markets.

At end-September, the BSP's GIR stood at $36.69 billion, enough to cover 5.8 months of imports of goods and payments of services and income.

The GIR is a key indicator of a country's ability to cover the foreign exchange requirements of its economy. It consists of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

In securing vital . . .

From page B1

should be made to comply with the procurement process to avoid controversies like that involving ZTE Corp. from happening again. But he said the rents should not prevent the Philippine government from securing loans from China.

While the Neda is tasked with studying the economic and social gains of proposed ODA-funded projects, it is still the concerned government agencies that are in charge of implementation. Monitoring the implementing agencies should also be intensified, Recto said.

Under the government's 2009 borrowing program, it is supposed to secure $1.5 billion worth of loans. Concessional loans would account for $1 billion, while ODAs would be tapped to secure $1.3 billion.

Recto said the government should rethink its borrowing program, given the rising interest rates on commercial loans...a result of the current global financial crisis.

E-mail: pi_science_health@inquirer.com.ph Editor Cecile D. Mangaoang

SCIENCE/HEALTH

CHIEF of PSC's guide, Peter John Magno, shows how properly placed mirrors could achieve interesting optical illusions.

RP's first science center goes on inspiring young minds

Text and photos by Charles E. Ramos

FOR THE PAST 18 years, this science and technology center in Mandaluyong City has consistently proven that dreaming and fostering the natural curiosity of young minds could be done even without resorting to glitzy lights and sound spectacles.

Located at the lush part of Brentwoods Country Building D, the interior of the Philippine Science Centrum is rather simple with its plain painted walls, lighting that is provided by a couple of fluorescent lamps and ventilation courtesy of two typical exhaust fans as well as wall-mounted fans.

But such setting has not stopped millions of young students from visiting the country's first interactive center with exhibits and galleries devoted to applied science and technology.

INTERACTIVE displays like the Archimedes Screw at the PSC could stimulate a child's inquiry into engineering science and mechanics.

2M visitors

In fact, the PSC has already welcomed close to 2 million visitors since its opening in 1990.

The science exhibits were decent looking, neatly conceptualized and fashioned by the center's in-house engineers and scientists.

They range from classic displays like Archimedes' Screw (a machine for raising water, invented by the ancient Greek scientist Archimedes) to the recently installed Tsunami Generator (simulates how the giant and deadly waves are produced).

"Children are naturally curious...after all, everything in the world is new to them, whether they are looking at the various optical illusion displays at the PSC or wondering why their hair like substances they touch a Van De Graaff ball. The place encourages discovery, wonder and once we only have children but even to their guardians and teachers as well," said Mike Pagatpatan, the center's managing director.

Brainchild

The PSC was the brainchild of engineer Mendoza Cortes, president and chair of the Philippine Foundation for Science and Technology whose first flagship program is the PSC.in.

As Mendoza's president, Carlos donated the 2,500-square-meter exhibition hall that houses PSC's 18 galleries that showcase 150 interactive exhibits.

The PSC also has two corporate-sponsored areas—the Ebara Building Center corner and the Meralco corner.

But what probably set the place apart from similarly themed destination is that the PSC only asks a minimal admission fee of P60 (adults) and P40 (students), while children under 2 years old and teachers are free of charge.

Link-up

"We actually link up with local agencies who are actually connected by schools whenever they plan a field trip. These agencies would include the Centrum as one of the destinations," Pagatpatan explained.

To expand in reach, PSC also moves around the country setting up traveling exhibitions like the Adventures in Discovery, Sci-Fun Caravan and Science on the Move.

These traveling exhibitions already reached 86 cities and towns around the country and already attracted 2.2 million visitors. Through these exhibitions, we hope to help[ed] provide an alternative science learning to fill up the dwindling science education in the countryside," Pagatpatan explained.

Stress and health

By Rahul B. Castillo

MEDICAL FILES

Recognizing stress early is the key to manage it effectively

THE OTHER NIGHT, MY WIFE BECKY ASKED I were reviewing all the patients we've seen that day in the clinic. Clearly a third had severe keyboard overguidance like golfer's elbow, chest pains, headaches, dizziness, gastric upset, leg numbness, all without any identifiable somatic or bodily problem. Hence, they are called psychosomatic disorders—nothing from the mind and spilling over to the body.

A housewife felt so much stress at home overwhelmed by her brood of six children. Her unappreciative husband complicates the stress. A young manager feels consistently edgy at work because of a particular boss. A finance officer at an investment firm can barely sleep at night with the current economic meltdown. A medical student feels all sorts of symptoms in subtle and especially during exam time. Another housewife complains of the same symptoms felt by a neighbor who died of heart attack recently despite all tests indicating she had a good heart.

Positive stimulus

Stressors can come from various sources. And we're constantly exposed to all sorts of stressors every day. For those who can handle them properly, upon a certain level of stress, a healthy it is a positive stimulus for us to do what we need to do in efficiency or effective by as we could. We can do remarkable things under the threat of a deadline when we're under stress. This is labeled as eustress.

But if these stressors are not properly managed, our body can react negatively to them and produce signs and symptoms which involve with our daily activities. We become dysfunctional. The stress becomes distress.

The overload literature is now teeming with studies showing that recurrent unmanaged stress over a period of time can actually lead to heart disease, diabetes and other medical problems.

A study published in the British Medical Journal studied the role of chronic job stress in 10,308 civil service employees aged 35-55 over a 14-year period. Chronic stress in these subjects has been linked to the development of metabolic syndrome characterized by obesity, hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol problems. The higher the stress level, the greater the chance of developing metabolic syndrome.

A possible explanation for this link of stress with metabolic syndrome may then cause poor unsafe health choices, including behaviors like smoking, heavy drinking, poor diet and lack of exercise—especially evident in those who were constantly under stress.

Signs, symptoms of stress

Recognizing stress early is the key to manage it effectively. Francelia Asensio writes in HRC Health & Lifestyle magazine subtle signs and symptoms of stress:

- Physically, one experiences dizziness, general body ache, nausea, headache, indigestion and disturbing tooth-while sleeping.
- Mentally, one constantly worries, becomes forgetful, and has difficulty in making decisions.
- Emotionally, one cannot control his/her anger, anxiety, and depression.
- Behaviorally, one succumbs to temporal stress-eating and drinking, and becomes highly critical of others.

Experts' recommendations

When you note these tell-tale symptoms, chances may be slowly creeping in and before it causes further damage, "unbalancing your life" may be the antidote. Francelia cites certain experts who recommend the following:

- Slow down. Living on a fast lane will make you more in debt even faster. Cause country runners realize pacing because it maximizes their effectiveness. This is the same with life. Linger a bit and make time to cherish/enjoy your time priorities.
- Learn to say "no." When you have properly set your priorities after slowing down, start learning to say "no" to requests that may set you off track. Many people don't know how to properly refuse, so they end up with tasks that weren't with their set priorities.
- Prioritize your health and well-being. A healthy diet and enough exercise remain the mainstay of stress management. A published study shows that metabolic syndrome, which stress can induce, can be reversed in as short as one month with a properly balanced high-fiber, low-fat diet with extra fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and moderate daily exercise (30-45 minutes of brisk walking).
- Stop being a workaholic and spend more time with family and friends. Working too much is an addiction. One should get out from this addictive pattern and start incorporating the joys of being at home. Playing with the kids, gardening and even starting your outdoor will prove to be therapeutic.
- Simplify your life. Simple dreams, simple needs, more time to enjoy the simple joys of happiness—this is the key to a stress-free life.
- Pursue your passion. One cause he is a job he/she enjoys doing.

Understanding loss

DISCOVER

Maurie Santos Ballon

AMONG MOST MAMMALS, MONOGAMY is the exception rather than the rule. The rate like prairie vole falls into the roughly 3 percent of mammalian species who make up the exception.

Introduce a male vole to a female vole, leave them alone for 24 hours and in the very least they'll end up forming a lifelong attachment. The bond between these animals is why researchers like using the prairie vole to study social relationships.

For example, a previous study from researchers at Emory University in the northern United States found a genetic variation in voles that was linked to their faithfulness to a single partner. A fiendish study looking at the human counterpart of the same gene found that people with two copies of one version were less likely to be married and more likely to have relationship issues than people with some copies of the other version of the gene.

Now Emory University's Larry Young has teamed up with researchers from the University of Regensburg in Germany to look at how the prairie voles deal with the loss of their partners.

Coping strategies

The researchers wanted to know if the animal's basic changes as a result of the pairing, and thus get a better understanding of the coping strategies used after the voles were separated. Young and his colleagues hoped the animal study would give researchers more insight into helping humans handle the grieving process as well.

In a study that appeared online Oct. 15 in the scientific journal Biological Psychiatry, the researchers matched 32 male and 32 female voles who'd been mated for at least six days. Half of the pairs were broken up as the voles were separated from their mate and placed in a beaker of water for several minutes (a test to see what it would do). If the vole chose to merely keep itself afloat instead of swim to safety, it was said to be giving up with the situation.

Young and his colleagues found that the males who'd been paired and then separated from females were more passive than the males who'd been separated from their brothers. The lack of reaction indicated they were more depressed than the other males who'd been separated from their companions. The male voles were not disturbed in grieving for their lost partners that they weren't paying as much attention to their new environment.

The altered mental state caused that when the voles bonded with females, the resulting physical connections also changed the animals' brain chemistry.

The researchers used the information to identify a particular chemical in the brain that didn't just play a role in the body's response to stress, but was more specifically likely to be involved in the process of grieving.

When Young and his colleagues gave the separated male voles a drug that blocked the chemical's receptor, the animals perked up and were more actively engaged than they'd previously been.

With further study, researchers might be able to use this research to help the bereaved cope with their grief.

(E-mail the author at mrsanto@mozcu.com.)

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Lito Cesar O. Mangalindan

PROPERTY

Initiating RP's Pacific gateway to the world

AWARD-WINNING architect and urban planner Palafox believes RP could follow Dubai's footsteps.

Text and photo by Charlie E. Bahar

FOR CENTURIES, IT has always been the western side of the Philippines—the one facing the South China Sea—that has enjoyed economic growth and development.

Proof, of course, is Metro Manila and the various ports and special economic zones located south of it, the Subic Bay Freeport Zone in Zambales and nearby, the Poro Point Freeport Zone in San Fernando, La Union.

Interestingly, the eastern area facing the Pacific Ocean has remained quiet, the opposite scenario of the province located along this side has remained among the country's poorest and most isolated.

Unfortunate

"It's unfortunate because there's so much history along this side of the Philippines: Divisoria explorer Ferdinand Magellan marked our country through the east side, landing in the island of Homonhon in the province of Eastern Samar. The Allied and the Philippine Commonwealth forces saw the strategic significance of landing in Palo, Leyte in order to begin their mission of retaking the Philippines from occupying Japanese forces. Even strategists ship their goods using the Pacific," noted Felino Palafox Jr., principal architect and urban planner/founder and managing partner of Palafox Associates.

Talking with the business daring the blessing of his new office in the corner of Ayala Avenue and VA Rufino Street, Palafox believes that developing the eastern side will create new opportunities for growth.

"While it has the potential to bring in billions of pesos in revenues to the country, it could also reduce settlement pressures as well as relieve existing traffic congestion levels of Metro Manila and outlying areas. The development will also create an international gateway so that side-looking up with the rest of the countries and cities around the Pacific Rim," Palafox explained.

Impossible you say?

For Palafox, the task is not so much different from when he first arrived in Dubai, United Arab Emirates almost three decades ago.

Becoming the only Filipino businessman—and the youngest team leader—of a quality planning team, Palafox helped transform that once fire fishing and pearling village into today's major business and tourism hub.

Excellent example

"Dubai is an excellent example for the Philippines. A few decades ago, its ruler realized that they can't connect to an open sea, which is very little values compared to their other Arab counterparts. To confront this challenge, he created a welcoming tourist and investment climate, along with special zones with independent laws, that seem attracted investors," he remembered.

The result was just phenomenal as Dubai successfully turned itself to a master of decades, into a port-of economy that took to put on the all weights of its neighbors, who are more than willing to invest in the city's real-hot real estate market.

"Dubai's property sector started its tremendous growth in 2002 when the city first announced that foreigners would be legally permitted to acquire freehold residential titles for designated areas. When that promise came to reality in 2006, an enormous wave of buying ensued," he remembered.

Emulate

Palafox said the Philippines could emulate the Dubai experience and become one of the most successful business hubs in the region, offering approach facilities such as state-of-the-art customers terminals, airport, seaports and free trade zones."

"I recently met with Sen. Edgardo Angara who plans to set up similar infrastructures, coupled with tax incentives and transportation and telecommunications facilities in the province of Aurora. The planned Aurora Special Economic Zone, for which Palafox will help design, will establish the province as the gateway to the Pacific, and could even unlock the resources of its rich and fertile neighboring provinces like Isabela, Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya," he said.

Dingalan Bay, located in the southern part of Aurora, will have a pivotal role in this transformation.

Palafox also reported that Suntex Bruns, who owns 50,000 hectares of waterfront property running from Dingalan, Aurora down to Infanta, Quezon is planning to develop a property....Pacific Coast City—that would become an alternative area to Metro Manila for industries, homes, schools and recreation.

"Building an international port here, will put the Philippines ahead of its Asian neighbors as it could cut shipping time by several days for those coming from the Pacific," Palafox said.

To connect this area to the rest of the Philippines, Aurora is now planning the plans for road networks (Baler-Casiguran Road and the Pantabangan-Metro Aurora Road) as well as airports.

"Manila and Dingalan are just over a hundred kilometers apart in a straight line moving northeast. A road network via Cabanatuan City in Nueva Ecija or through the mountains of Montalban in Rizal could make Aurora accessible in just a few hours.

"If you build the roads, people and business will follow. In my experience, this is a foolproof way to jumpstart growth," Palafox insisted.

Megaworld's new BPO building considers tenants' requirements

THE OPEN-AIR fashion's are near the offices as the Commerce & Industry Plaza.

THE COMMERCE & Industry Plaza is fully integrated with McKinley Hill's Venetian Mall.

IN A RECENT SURVEY conducted by a US professional services firm, it discovered that 90 percent of workers believe that workplace design affects their level of productivity. The same survey also showed that nearly half of all workers are willing to work an extra hour if they had a better work environment.

Creating innovative, technologically advanced and healthy workspaces has been a rallying priority for the office projects of Megaworld, the country's top developer of buildings for the business processing and outsourcing industry. Its latest project, the new Commerce & Industry Plaza, has been designed to accommodate the needs of these companies and the workforce they employ.

15-story office tower

Located at Megaworld's 38-hectare McKinley Hill township in Fort Bonifacio, the 15-story office tower features open-plan floors, with uninterrupted office space of up to 1,800 square meters. This airy work environment is suited for the multiple-modular workspaces found in the BPO sector. This open setup likewise enables tenants to save on energy through the efficient use of light and air conditioning.

The building also has telephone lines redundancy, 24/7 500 percent generator backup, high-speed elevators and ample parking space. As a result, a BPO company can easily set up and expand within the building as their business grows.

"Megaworld's team of architects and planners has integrated in the Commerce & Industry Plaza the efficiencies and features deemed essential to the operations of BPO firms," Megaworld SVP for Business Development Jericho Co said.

All in one setting

Furthermore, the Commerce & Industry Plaza is integrated within the mixed-used development. Here the Venetian Mall and its Grand Canal and Piazza Grande bring rest and recreation and lifestyle areas close to the employees working inside the building. The area also houses an upscale, multistorey residential development called The Venice Luxury Residences to complete Megaworld's mantra of live-work-play-learn all in one setting for all of its developments.

If you are looking for a house today

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Marcia de Guzman

IF YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A HOUSE today, what would you search out for?

First of all, you should decide just how quickly you want to move in. If your folks or your current landlord were just asking to throw you out, then your search could be ringed with somewhat more urgency than otherwise. In which case, building a new house from scratch may not be an option for you, as this could take months or even years to get right. Instead, you should be scouring the ads for a ready-made abode.

Vital decision

On the other hand, if you had enough time and patience to get by, you would have to decide on your architect and builder. This is a vital decision, one of those make-or-break points that dictates whether you would cherish or despise your new home for the rest of your life. Whether you're single or married, you're not simply on this house partner to your spouse.

If you have had no previous dealings with the firm, you must slowly ask around about them and scrutinize their previous projects. Naturally, you should only strike a deal if you like what you see. Take notice that taking on someone to handle your design or construction is similar to a marriage, with concomitant desires, schedules, budgets and expectations.

The next question, about the all-pervading one, would be: how much are you willing to spend? Do you have the funds available to spend right now or will you have to take out a loan? In which case, you should get going with the paperwork soon!

Good real estate deals

Remember that good real estate deals can be had if you are backed by a good credit history, stable financials and some steady currency. In Dubai payments like interest, several materials purchased could be had as a substantial discount when bought in bulk or in cash. Even buying a ready-made house will also mean some cash outlay for minor repairs or finishing, and maybe even additional furniture and fixtures.

After signing up a project mate, you have to buckle down and discover regarding just what you really want to build. It would help if you had a clear wishlist, clippings of structures and rooms attractive to you, colors and textures you would want to live with. This is the learning stage, the designer needs to know exactly what you want, what you really need, and what you expect to get in time.

Project parameters

You must both know the parameters of the project, both structurally and financially. You have to be certain both agree on the scope of each one's responsibility and the repercussions of any changes in your plans. After he has drawn up the house plans to your satisfaction and you have imagined and squeezed the view from every one of its corners, you can begin the tedious process of actual construction.

For months on end you will be strolling every opportunity to visit the site, watching the growth of your home from a small, dirt hole in the ground to the topmost tile on your roof. You will be acquiring a vast lingo of construction terms and remarkable knowledge of a range of building materials. Meanwhile, you would have agonized over the smallest size in cabinet pulls and fretted over the state of your bank account. You would be meeting and dealing with a parchment of personalities, from mad bank managers and strict village board members to backbreaking clay importers and heaving suppliers.

Variety of decisions

There would be a variety of decisions to make on your every day, some as trivial as the shade of grout you are meaningful on the enlarging of a window, each one with its ripple effect of time, cost, structural considerations, and setbacks. You would be honing not just your decision-making skills, but you would also be plumbing the depths of your tastes and self-knowledge—the abilities to recognize what you really want and the nerve to go with it.

Then, just when it seemed like it would never get done, the house is finished. The final touches of window polishing and garden landscaping are over me and there stands the house of your heart, your sweat, and your dreams. Now it's time to move your things in. As you set the contents of your life, to bring in the objects that will define your territory.

But it is only after you have settled down in your new residence—experiencing more than a few seasons in it—that you will truly know if you made his right call. Is this the place for which you had dreamed, planned and saved? Only time will tell. But then, you find that it is not the house that will make you happy, not even if every door sheet simply or if each window does ensure a perfect view.

You will have to discover the knot of self-worth from within your heart that this new structure can only affirm. You will have to find for yourself that sense of fulfillment and gratitude for having achieved a dream and living it. No one, least of all no thing, can offer you that. The well-spring of happiness and satisfaction you must realize from yourself. Only then will you believe that your house is your home; that your quest has ended in success.

For your comments, please e-mail to marcia@gamreal@yahoo.com

FESTIVE, MUSICAL GRAND AFFAIR

DMCI Homes launches Paloverde Tower

THREE MILESTONES ACHIEVED by DMCI Homes highlighted the recent launch of Paloverde Tower, condominium of Dasmariñas Gardens Condominium. Paloverde Tower, sibling on the theme "Good Things Come in Six."

As the third and last tower to emerge on the flourishing high-rise development in Mandaluyong City, Paloverde Tower's grand launch was celebrated with the commissioning of the three-tower Dasmariñas Gardens as a fully operational residential condominium community. Its first two towers—Willows and Sycamore—have been serving as dining residences to young and mobile urban professionals and their families who are traveling to a strategic address and a welcoming environment.

Celebrations

Held recently at Dasmariñas Gardens, the launch of the Paloverde Tower started and ended with celebrations and gaiety befitting the unveiling of Dasmariñas Garden's third and final tower. The festivities started with the blessing of the model unit by Fr. Jovelino Palermo, who also led the blessing then of the newly opened Paloverde Tower lobby and activity area.

Prospective buyers and clients had a glimpse of Paloverde Tower's features and amenities, among them the newly-opened hotel-like building lobby and area- and two-bedroom model units. Paloverde Tower is a 31-story high-rise residential tower which offers good location for the center of Boni Avenue and M. Vicente Street, less than a minute per from units with magnificent views of the Metro Manila skyline, within a fully operational and thriving community in Dasmariñas Gardens.

Festive mood

Leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony and blessing of the Paloverde Tower model units and lobby were Pat C. Ofrecio, director for sales; May L. Portillo, director for marketing; Alma A. Floresca and Ruth G. Bello, project directors and project managers, respectively, for Dasmariñas Gardens. The grand sun theme of Paloverde Tower was observed and until this evening, as guests and attendees were treated to a sumptuous buffet catered by Cuneta and a star-studded musical production by jazz sensation Olivia Jansen. Energetic comedic Top Stones, and ABS-CBN crooner Richard Poon.

Paloverde Tower at Dasmariñas Gardens is another quality development by DMCI Homes.

PROSPECTIVE buyers and clients are having a glimpse of Paloverde Tower's charming features and amenities such as the new- and two-bedroom model units.

2bU LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan
Associate Editor Pam Pastor

Who in the world is Pablo Banila?

Is he a cyber psycho? Or is he many people?

How Multiply's most hated cyber-stalker

By Bianca Consunji

HE BEGAN AS A SERIES OF SPITE. About everyone popping up on my Multiply viewing history. He didn't bother me at first, because I was used to friendly strangers visiting my site. But when he began visiting on an almost daily basis—and under different usernames, although with the same name—I started to wonder who in the world was Pablo Banila.

Visits to his websites offered no clue. His avatar showed a creepy-looking guy with stained chin-length hair (think Severus Snape from Harry Potter) and a flashing sign that read, "Pablo Banila has a crush on you! That's why he visited your website!"

That would have been almost flattering had I not already known that he had visited the websites of at least a hundred other people—all under different usernames and the same annoying avatar. He also has a domain, www.pablobanila.com, but it often times out, only rambling passages of text and close-up photos of himself.

People started commenting. "Please get a life, you pervert," wrote one girl in her blog, after losing count of his many usernames—pablobanila, ppablobbobanila, rainbowsunnyroller, sunnyperfume, laughingsunshine, silverdiamond, blackbrownsweetheart, thebrickbetweenthetrees, etc. People left similar comments on that entry saying, "OMG he viewed our too!" or "He views mine too, it's so creepy!"

Others claimed he, "He views me every other day, more often than I check my own Multiply site," while guys posted obscene comments like, "Sir chesbi ate ni sir, and I'm a boy."

So far, his visits to sites have been harmless (all he does is view homepages; he doesn't leave comments)... but creepy... there's just no other word for it. Attempts to discover his identity have so far been futile. But identity aside, what everyone wants to know is, how does he find time to check out all those Multiply pages?

Is Pablo Banila actually a team of high school kids with nothing better to do?

Is Pablo Banila actually a group of college students doing a psychology research project for their thesis?

Is Pablo Banila a new Internet virus?

Is Pablo Banila actually just the government looking for suspected terrorists by combing through the pages of unsuspecting Multiply users?

Is Pablo Banila merely the victim of pranksters who are out to get him?

Or is Pablo Banila just really a sad person with no friends and nothing better to do?

In any case, Multiply users are waiting for an answer. But until then, Pablo Banila continues to stalk our websites...and our nightmares.

E-mail the author at bianca.consunji@yahoo.com

OOPS! Pablo Banila has a crush on you!

Eyeballing online friends —safely

By Anna Katarina Bars
PAREF-Woodhill School, Inc.

ON A COOL SUMMER DAY, people walking by the Sea and Joey's stores at Ocean World City, a mall along Roxas Valley Road in Singapore, noticed two teenagers, both with short black hair and light colored skin, conversing animatedly.

The girls looked like childhood friends, eyes gleaming as they spoke of animé, common acquaintances, and their lives in general. Little did the passersby know that the talkative twins in front of them had never met before in their lives.

Apprehension

My parents have time and again expressed apprehension over me using the Internet, mainly using a Livejournal account, and living practically the past three years of my life in front of

STRAILING C)

MICHELI and I considered ourselves twins and they actually met in person.

Eyeballing online ...

From page C1

other people's eyes. My father sometimes worries about me—that one day I'll go off to meet an online pal and never return home.

I get irritated, but his unease is reasonable.

When I went to Singapore, I wrote up my online journal about those apartments. My aunt generously offered to have me stay in her unit since she lived all alone.

A friend I met through an online community said it sounded familiar. Sheryl, who had turned sixteen only two months earlier, told me where she lived, and mentioned that it was very close to Great World City and a certain gas station that my family passed everyday when leaving Siloso Ridge.

She gave me her cell phone number, and later that afternoon I text-messaged her through my aunt's phone (of course, with Mom's permission). We exchanged messages and agreed to meet at first and Jenny's store at Great World City. After freshening up, I went to our meeting place with Mom in tow.

She came.

Sheryl looked very much like me. We both had "chinky" eyes and short hair, though Sheryl's hair was shorter and thicker. (I must have the picture to prove it.) As soon as she saw Mom, we started talking, though we were both, for a few moments at least, tongue-tied. Or perhaps I was the only one.

SEEING Sheryl in Singapore—Sheryl and I took this picture at an arcade, amid machine malfunctions!

I'm free, but not ridiculously free like many others are. I like it better this way

Mom had had to accompany me (which actually was a relief). I realized that, although I had been given limitations, I had been trusted enough.

Perhaps not all people online are good. For every "real" person there is an Uncle Samuel, there are two lines on the message boards. Many parents are becoming more grounded. I've heard of some people getting abducted when they try to meet up with those they've met online.

However, I follow my parents' guidelines. In exchange, my parents try to understand my life and my choices. When Mom asks me about what I'm doing, I am able to answer truthfully. Both my parents let me know when it is not right to give out personal information, and I listen. I'm free, but not ridiculously free like many others are. I like it better this way.

Smart

Meeting people from the internet is simply a matter of trust and being wise about your decisions. If you're honest and smart, you'll be fine.

Since that day in Great World City, I have met other people from the internet. Lets (or Rudiwol, who works in Mindoro, met me at the mall. We ate lunch together, bought books, and watched my mom's bowling tournament—all the while chatting as my driver's constant translations.

Mirko (also known as Mirsin), then in Ateneo College and now in De La Salle University, happened to be in Subic at the time I was there, so we met up at the open-air cinema and chatted while my brother played tennis downstairs. And while I was in the United States, I spoke several times on the phone with Shannon, a college student from California. (Their interest in my "quality of writing," as she put it, led to Sun!Philippines.com.) Close enough!)

Thanks to the Internet, I have been to many more places and have met some people. Now my museum sets are the other way around. Recently I met exchange students in Japan, and now I keep in contact with them through the Internet.

Behold the wonders of technology!

Bangkok by kids

By Bianca Consunji

Most teens rarely take the time to read a book, let alone actually write one. But Iana and Andrea Dawson, who are 14 and 15 years old respectively, can now call themselves authors of a book—a travel guide, to be specific.

Brandon sees Iana and Andrea, both students at the Bangkok Patana British International School, moved to Bangkok as toddlers. The children of expatriate parents (a Filipino mother and a French father), they will make sure they visit the Philippines frequently. The girls were recently in Manila in order to promote their book, "Bangkok Guide For and By Kids."

"The book is actually the culmination of several years of thinking. Whenever we had friends come over to Bangkok, they would always ask us where to go and what to eat," said Iana. "That's when we decided to make a book that kids our age could use."

AUTHORS Andrea and Iana Dawson are only in their teens

Andrea said, "Usually, when people get travel guides, they go for Lonely Planet or something similar. It's all—I mean no flame, but sometimes, we get really bored when we look through the other guidebooks! So our book is something that younger people can enjoy reading and looking at."

The book is definitely for the young—brightly colored illustrations fill each page, and sidebars captivate even the shortest attention spans. Almost everything is translated in Thai, so young (or not so young) travelers can easily make their way around the city just by showing cab drivers or pedestrians the name of the destination of their choice.

"We personally visited every place that we recommend in the book," Andrea said. "We choose all our favorites, then turned out the ones that we feel could be enjoyed by many people. It took us three years to visit the places, write the text and proofread everything, so we made sure everything was done thoroughly!"

"There's something for everyone," Iana added. "It's not just the usual museums and restaurants you see in guidebooks. We mentioned activities you can do with your friends, like wakeboarding and rafting. And we give warnings about some places and very honest opinions."

Andrea said, "Bangkok is full of surprises, and we want people to see what goes on beyond the usual tourist destinations. Sometimes, we'd be stuck in traffic because an elephant would walk by. Or sometimes, a family of five would ride by in a motorcycle. There are the things we want people to see in Bangkok, and we think that if you check out the places in our book, you'd be able to experience the city more."

Bangkok Guide For and By Kids is available at Polly Booksel.

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Are all vaccines created equal?

Not quite. In the quest to help us get more out of our medicines, some vaccines have been formulated with a novel technology known as AS04 adjuvant system. It's been used in hepatitis vaccines to enhance the immune response of recipients, and lately, in the new vaccine against HPV, or Human Papilloma Virus, the virus that causes cervical cancer.[1]

When an HPV vaccine has the AS04 adjuvant, immune response in patients starts higher and lasts longer. So where other vaccines may need booster shots, the HPV vaccine with AS04 adjuvant is designed to provide strong cervical cancer protection that lasts.[2-4]

"AS04 adjuvant system" sounds like something only science teachers know about. But if you care about your health, it's a phrase worth knowing.

What's up in UP Mindanao?

TAKING a break at the UP canteen

By Jason Ramon Boga
UP Mindanao

WE EXIST. UP MINDANAO exists. There's no other way to start this article but to scream that we exist. If you've not been here, well, read on and feel what it's like to be in the premiere university down south.

Chow time

If you're the kind of person who can't order donut without eating something, then you'll feel UP Mindanao is paradise. 'Food' stalkers and snack bars abound all over the campus.

The school canteen, managed by Ate Marichu and her snaky eyes, still serves some to tickle your taste buds with its good food at rock-bottom prices. Try the pork Ati-tinginagan and chicken nonakarin (only P20/pot serving).

For those in a hurry, Mahal's refreshments, conveniently located beside the university dean, offers your favorite quickies, from sandwiches to noodles, iced tea to chocolate drinks. It also offers photocopying services.

If you like pastel canvas in sensitive quarters and smoothies in tall glasses, Ling's snack bar is the place to go. It's also a good place to hang out if you like to be in harmony with nature, since you will be beside one of several hubay balo standing underneath big trees. Just be on the lookout for bees.

Mobile vendettas also roam the campus grounds, offering everything from fishnets to cream and Fweti-Kwak.

Campus fashion

Of course, one's freedom of expression extends to clothing as well. UP and Mindanao, being nothing pure, boast of diverse cultures, identities and fashion trends.

Going to school is no different from going to the beach here in UP Mindanao (except that we do not carry with us inflatable floaters). Everyday is summer, which means nearly everyone is up to wearing shirts, shorts and flip-flops.

Dump your shoes, because they suffocate your feet. They're only useful when it's PE time.

Whatever the brand may be, flip-flops are a staple here in UP Mindanao, since they nicely match just about any outfit. Whether you're running late or walking slow, flip-flops will never fail to take you to your destination. Plus, they're really good for trekking from one building to another.

Colorful graphics dominate on campus. They're everyone's favorite, being simple, because very comfortable apparel, especially in the heat. Some gear for shorts. Stock some earthlock to your bag and you might as well head off to the beach.

Fun and more fun

Studying is fun. Don't laugh.

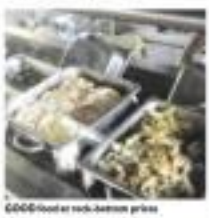
But if you don't like to study, you can hang by the administration building across to soak up sun and fit.

Chatting with your friends—or just about anyone—is fun. You can even chat and laugh with some of your professors during vacant hours (they're good at convincing the stuff you discuss in class into jokes). Picking on someone is fun. Bullying is fun, sometimes. See everyone's discouraged to do that because it's fun.

When all else fails, resort to studying. Studying is fun.

More stuff await to be discovered here in UP Mindanao. Yes, we exist.

Do you want to tell us about your school? E-mail it...[illegible]@inquirer.com.ph.



GOOD food at rock-bottom prices

GIORDANO
World without Strangers
GIORDANO'S CONNECTED COLLECTION
Aesthetic designs driven by force, electronics, industrial design, and intercommunication are the inspiration behind Giordano's Connected Collection. The look is sleek, dressed-up and very classy reminiscent of characters in dark glasses of a popular futuristic trilogy; the message is clear- as with our gadgets of choice, style can go very well with utility, which has always been what Giordano is. So take part in this perfect merge fashion and technology, get Giordano, stay Connected!

super LIFESTYLE

Deliciously different

New Mango Cashew Roll

It's a new twist to an old favorite. Light angel food cake with fresh mango bulbs and cashew nuts. So fresh, so light, and so heavenly.

Break away from the usual and take home something special today.

It's sweet beautiful with Red Ribbon

He lives on the edge—literally

San Diego native on the ups and downs of his profession

By Ryan Fernandez

IMAGINE HANGING ON FOR DEAR LIFE, bare-calvin hands gripping the rough side of a rock tower jutting out from the sea. Should you slip, the only way to break your fall would be to plummet hundreds of feet into the waters below.

The mere mind would drink water alone for miles, but for professional rock climber Chris Lindner, there's little to be afraid of when it comes to "deep water" soloing.

"You just fall, make a big splash, and start the climb all over again," says the 29-year-old San Diego native and 2008 Petzone 101 Rock-during Champion. He's in to the specialized form of rock climbing.

On a recent trip he scaled limestone formations in Halong Bay, Vietnam. Lindner—whose parents were into rock climbing as a family sport—began climbing at age 3, was on a competitive rover at age 4, and has never stopped since then.

His parents' (a rougher, more exciting childhood has brought him across North America, Patagonia, Spain, and now, the Philippines where he's eyeing such destinations as Mindanao for climbing and Siargao for surfing.

Science behind it

This rock climber could be clambering across a near-horizontal rock wall, or dropping while suspended off the side of a cliff. Where some might see only sheer recklessness in that, Lindner foresees flow. There is a science behind it all. "I've seen kids with huge arms who just try to climb headlong," he recalls. "But then they waste their stamina. Technique and persistence are always better than brute force."

He says the work is 70 percent mental and 30 percent physical because every core minute poses its own challenge. Before anything else, it must be visualized and analyzed step by step in one's mind.

That's exactly what Lindner lives for. "In mountain climbing, the aim is to reach the peak. In sports climbing, I don't aim for the peak. It could just be walking that one wall, that one part of the mountain, and enjoying every bit of it."

Culture

The moment he reaches a new destination, Lindner spends the usual tourist circuit of museums, restaurants, and landmarks, and is usual immerses himself in the culture, he lives with the locals. "For example I met up with friends in Barcelona, and stayed with them," says Lindner.

He never shies the global community of friends he's made from rock climbing.

He becomes one with the natives. He can rehearse the locals out. While Deep Water Soloing in Vietnam, he stayed on a boat for five days, on a simple diet of seafood, traveling after a long day of climbing, he realized that a simple hand gesture of holding a beer mug and sipping it means the same thing in both Asia and his Vietnamese hosts showed.

In his travels, Lindner also gets to promote himself, the line of surf and outdoor footwear he uses. He says the company's hallmark timeless Us-technology suits his outdoor lifestyle. He likes its comfort, lightness, and durability in varying terrain and weather conditions. "I've even given them [Sanuk] some ideas for future designs," says Lindner with a big grin.

To know more about Chris Lindner, visit his website at www.chrislindner.com.

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LIFELINE RESCUE

I ang mga Pare Ko

Mga pre, may continuation pa ang reunion ng barkada.

Sony Ericsson

Graphics Design Midas Joshua Cotic

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Where to Stop Where to Go

Quantum Hotels & Resorts expands to Boracay

NOW THERE ARE FOUR REASONS to spend quality time on the beautiful island of Boracay. Quantum Hotels and Resorts now manages "The Residences", which is composed of deluxe villa, suites and apartments at Balinese and Mediterranean Architectural. This unique private resort destination contains 126 hectares of tropical habitat, an exclusive white sand beach, 18 holes of par 72 world-class championship golf, and 196 luxurious residences.

The four newly-opened complexes operating under "The Residences" are named Bellavera, Stella, Amalfi and Mediterra – all of which possess first-class, fully-appointed accommodations with breathtaking views of the surrounding hills, ocean and golf course.

These spacious residences were created for individuals seeking the idyllic island beauty and exclusive tropical setting that are a part of the on-going expansion of Quantum's multi-faceted resorts that overall Golf Estate ringed by a crystal clear sea and well preserved coral reefs. With its white powdery sands, Boracay has consistently been ranked as one of the top ten beaches of the world.

For more information about The Residences at Balinese and Mediterranean Reserved contact: tel. nos. (+63) 362-288-5587 or 89, fax no. (+63) 362-288-5170, e-mail: boracayreservations@quantumresorts.com or boracayadmin@quantumresorts.com. For more information, contact Quantum Hotels and Resorts at tel. no. (632)884-6900 to 98, fax: (632) 891-3124, or e-mail: sales@quantumresorts.com.

ASCOTT INT'L MANAGEMENT PHILS IS ALL HEART IN THE 2008 MABUHAY AWARDS

With its enduring efforts of delivering excellence in service, the Ascott International Management, Philippines proved this year's Mabuhay Awards efficiency candidates vying for the title of the company's esteemed categories: Managerial Award, Supervisory Award, Front of the House Award and the Heart of the House Award. A renovated award-giving body organized by the Association of Asian Resource Managers in the Hospitality Industry, the Mabuhay Awards recognizes associates who have consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication and commitment in service towards guests, colleagues, the management and community. This is all in part of the organization's goal to assess instilling pride and commitment in the hospitality profession. Staying true to form in delivering international standards coupled by personalized and innovative service, Ascott hierarchical finalists, winners in their own right, showed their unique experiences with the group in its constant pursuit of contributing to the well-being and success of residents staying in the Philippines. The evening concluded with Ascott International bagging the award for the newest category - the Best in the House Award with overall housekeeping performance. Antonio Medina, Acquisitions of the company's services officer – Boracay, Antonio Medina has exemplified the group's core value of exceeding the expectations and going the extra mile for their guests. This year's 2008 Mabuhay Awards was held at the PICC Cultural Center Complex.

The Ritz Spa's Pre-Christmas promo

CONVENIENCE IS SOMETHING THAT A PERSON AWAYS when going anywhere. Here in Metro Manila, there can be no other spa that is more convenient than The Ritz Spa in Makati. The PSE Spa, located at 16/F of Ayala Ctr. Makati. Manila, is a spa state-of-the-art spa where one can relax up, refresh and energize at their body, and very because of its services but also no because of its courteous and hospitable staff. One can sink and immerse in their smartly crafted jacuzzi, recharge and moisturize ones body in the wet and dry sauna. It offers services to you whole body massage to foot reflexology, facial care, body treatments and scrubs, hair care and even waxing and whitening. After hours of pampering you can be treated to their tempting snacks and drinks served at their Coffee Shop. And now, as an early Christmas treat to all its valued clients, The Ritz Spa is giving 20 percent off on all its packages. At The PSE, one can definitely enjoy a whole day of unlimited relaxation from head to toe. It now feels satisfied with The Ritz Spa's excellent ambiance and quality service, you should not miss going to its branch in Subic, located at Road 4 corner 10 in front of Subic Bay Yacht Club, The Ritz Tropical Spa.

Have a Halloween re-treat at The Richmonde Hotel

BE ENCHANTED BY THE SPECIAL RATES THIS FEARSOME Hotel room on all local residents when they stay in any of the hotel's well-appointed rooms from Oct. 30 to Nov. 6. Rates go for as low as P3,150/net for a Superior Room, P3,850/net for a Deluxe Room, P4,200/net for a Junior Suite, P5,600/net for a One-Bedroom Suite and P6,300/net for a Two-Bedroom Suite. To add to the thrill of these delightful discounted treats, rates also come with a delectable breakfast buffet feast at the Grill for two persons (or up to three persons for Two-Bedrooms Suite occupants), complimentary use of the Health Club facilities, such as the gym, sauna and heated indoor pool and 10 percent discount at Head Zone Salon during their stay. So make The Richmonde Hotel your Twilight Time this Halloween. This promo is valid only for local residents and reservations with valid ID. For more inquiries and reservations, call 638-7777 or call Room Reservations direct at 638-5411. The Richmonde Hotel is located at 21 San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Financial Hotel Directory

A Human Touch

As the largest maker of music devices, Nokia once again proved that they are the leaders for the ultimate mobile music experience, through the launching of Nokia 5800 Xpress Music.

MUSIC in your hands

SINGAPORE—MUSIC HAS A big influence their helps define people, especially the young. It isn't just a topic of conversation, it also speaks the desire to communicate. This vision is strongly shared by Nokia.

As the world's largest maker of mobile phones with music devices, Nokia recently launched the debut of its pioneering "Comes with Music" digital entertainment service and unveiled the new Nokia 5800 XpressMusic, a fun phone, it is Nokia's first "touch screen" phone for the mass-market. Its aim is to provide the best music experience possible, making it a clear celebration of Nokia being a lifestyle brand.

"With a range of endless array of music phones available, the Nokia 5800 Xpress-Music will be among the first devices to support "Comes with Music," a ground-breaking service which offers one year of unlimited access to the entire Nokia Music Store catalogue. Consumers who buy a "Comes with Music" device will be able to explore and enjoy a diverse catalogue of music of international and local artists in the most curated and personalized way, revolutionizing their digital music experience, removing the way for everyone to have access to music—legally.

Taking advantage of "human" touch across technology, the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic introduces the "Media Bar," a handy drop-down menu that provides direct access to music and entertainment, including favorite tracks, videos and photos. The Media Bar also offers a direct link to the N40 and to easy online sharing. Because the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic supports Flash content, individuals can surf the entire Web, not just pieces of it. Adding more, the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic offers all the music essentials, including a graphic equalizer, 8GB memory for up to 6000 tracks and support for all main digital music formats, and a 3.5mm jack, to built-in surround sound stereo speakers is considered the loudest and the most powerful speaker in mobile phones today.

It is practically a digital home for all of your music tracks, since for us Pinoys, music matters most so trending, it's easy to fall in love with Nokia's new music phones again.

The Nokia 5800 Xpress Music will be available in the country in 2009.

MODEL with the Nokia 5800 XpressMusic

FOR SALE
ANAVANA COVE HOUSE & LOT
(Still Under Construction)
A project initiated by SUBIC
(North Coast Dev.'s partner in Anvaya Cove)
LA 700sqm. | FA 254sqm.
Tropical Asian Home
3BR, 4 bath, 2 car garage
Call Trina or Nikki
[illegible]

Tours, Leisure & Chow

Traders Hotel celebrates Barney mania

MANILA'S MOST FRIENDLY HOTEL TRADERS HOTEL, MANILA (3-05 November 1) indulge in a "Once-nice-Birthday Brunch" at Latitude for only P1,395 net for adults and 55 percent off for children ages four to 10 years old (inclusive of service charge and other applicable taxes. For every P2,500 net consumption, the family can take home one free entrance ticket worth P850 to any of the "Once-nice Birthday Party" shows at the SM Mall of Asia and SM Megamall. The whole family may also shop by Traders Boutique, Manila's Exclusive Ballroom Event Center. There 11 to 12 p.m. to experience "Playtime with Barney." Guests may avail of the special rates and treat on a sumptuous "Barney Brunch" at Latitude for only P1,000 net for adults, P800 net for ages four to 10 and P300 net for children four years to five years old. The kids may also have their pictures taken with their favorite purple-skinned buddy, play games and bring home Barney giveaways among other treats. For dining reservations call (63 2)523-7011 local 2402 or send an e-mail to reservations.thm@shangri-la.com.

An Asian Thanksgiving at The Bellevue

CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING WITH YOUR FAMILY and loved ones as you indulge in a festive Asian cuisine at Café Aya on Nov. 27. Then, savor the rich and diverse flavors of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia as you take a stroll from the scrumptious Asian buffet offerings from Nov. 14-30. Sample must-try dishes such as the spicy Siberian with caramelized shallots, Prawns with Apple Celery and olive oil, Sharwin with sweet and spicy sauce, and the tasty Lychee Curry with Chili, experience the bounty of Thanksgiving and the finest of Asian food only at The Bellevue Hotel. Find the rush of sweet sensation at the Pastry Corner invites you to take a bite of its irresistible and mouth-watering pastries. The Bellevue's Cake of the month, Delight yourself with every taste of this month's watering cake-Holly made of almond marzipan sponge, topping with chocolate chip mousse layer and filled with smooth vanilla cream. Taste the best of both worlds across sip down to the tempting and delicious Mango Jello. The Bellevue's drink of the month for only P180 net. Experience the thrill of sweet sensation only at The Bellevue Hotel for inquiries, call 771-8151.

Crustasia Trisarra buffet

CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING WITH THE SPECTACULAR ASIAN BUFFET AT P2880++ per head, Monday-Saturday, lunch 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and dinner 6 to 10 p.m. only at Crustasia Trisarra North Triangle Second Level Seatron City with tel. no. 981-3007. Serving ala carte are Crustasia Prosecipiant Mall, Rockwell Center, tel. no. 728-0403, Shangri-La Plaza Mall 6/L, tel. no. 910-8388 and Corte de las Palmas, Alabang Town Center, tel. no. 772-2988.

Have a bewitched Halloween celebration at Sofitel

FALL UNDER THE SOFITEL SPELL AND raise happy Halloween treats and activities from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2, at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila. There are no tricks just terrific treats in Sofitel's line up of bewitched treats for the entire family. Starting Oct. 30 until Nov. 1, there a wonderful time with your family in a relaxing sweet atmosphere and enjoy 50 percent off on your second room plus complimentary pass for children to the Bewitched Trick or Treat activity on Nov. 2.

On Oct. 31, Nov. 1 and 2, Bewitched Festivities at Spiral will feature Berenguer Halloween dishes in its seven interactive stations. Moreover, Spiral will be transformed into a creepy Halloween party scene with magic shows, face painting, balloon twisting and much more.

As a finale for Halloween celebrations, Bewitched Trick or Treat activities will take place at the Runway Stations room Nov. 2 at 3 p.m. with fun activities for kids like scary story telling, games, crafts making, loot bags for kids, magic shows, balloon twisting and face painting.

The Bewitched Halloween at Sofitel is in cooperation with Movit, Cumberland's, Dewa, Our Tea, Orion Choco Pie, PIGZ, Cielo Pasta, Herbs, Mike and Ike, Lyn, Mott and Mr. Gimmick.

For more information and reservations, call Sofitel Philippine Plaza at 832-0999, or e-mail rooms.reservations@sofitelmanila.com.

Previous Hotels Directory

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Promo period: October 19 to December 31, 2008.

Good for more than a round or two

Text and Photos By Mon Quintos

KAREN, MY PARTNER IN crime-by-default, and I play a little game of tag-of-war every other Wednesday night or so.

From my office in the north, I would travel to Makati to her place of work along Jupiter Street and pick her up. Our plans usually involve going home and having a quiet dinner. Two minutes into the car ride, however, the plan normally changes.

Our dialogue goes like this:

Karen: Mon, <Insert Name Here> is in *Fiamma*. We should stop by and say hello.

Me: Define "stop by." The last time we "stopped by and said hello" we were home at Intramuros "Closing Time" was being played.

Karen: We won't stay that long. Let's just have a round or two.

Me: Uhm, okay.

Of course we just don't have a round or two. With a drink-all-you-can offer every Wednesday night, you're encouraged to drink at least three rounds. Okay maybe five. And perhaps an entire of Bacchus Blue.

But more than the drinks, the main attraction of Wednesday nights for me is the 80s and 90s music that's played throughout the evening. Karen normally freaks out when they start playing "Ice For Two's "Time and Love" or Modernett's "Where's The Party?"

I get excited when the DJ starts playing some obscure song like Amie Carnere's "While Our Ye Weaver" or a classic like Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in The Dark." We invariably end up dancing, covering songs that range from The Cycling Pack to The Burning Man.

Before going home, we almost always chow down on their pizzas in an attempt to even out the alcohol and sober up. Fiamma also has other theme nights, and we've managed to check out the Fresh Fridays (featuring R&B and Hip-hop music) and Sinful Saturdays (with funky house music all night). The crowd is slightly different (read: younger) but the energy is quite the same.

Last week, we got home relatively early with Hanna 1987's "Love Plus One" looping in my head.

Fiamma's energetic theme nights guarantee extended happy hours

SCENES from a night at Fiamma.

Fiamma

Address: 33 Jupiter Street, Makati City
Contact No.: 897-1712
Hours: Mondays to Saturdays, opens at 7pm
Drinks: Bacardi Mix, Php 400 for a shaker (serves 2); Cocktails at Php 250
Theme Nights:
FIAMMA FLASHBACK MONDAYS (DJ and new music mashup and mixes up)
TOP 5, SOUTH WEDNESDAYS (Request to your favorite DJs and MIX DOLL)
FIAMMA FRESH FRIDAYS (R&B and Hip Hop with celebrities and models rocking the box)
SINFUL SATURDAYS (House music)

The Body Shop® "Nature's way to Beautiful" Grand Celebration

Last 25 August 2008, The Body Shop® celebrated its unique and pioneering heritage with the Grand Celebration at the Shangri-la Mall Grand Atrium with a media and consumer launch featuring The Body Shop® philosophy, "Nature's Way to Beautiful". The intimate affair was hosted by awesome hosts Archie Del Amparo no are attended by members of the media. The Body Shop® President Ms. Sylvia Chang also graced the memorable event.

The program highlighted The Body Shop® philosophy and there is only way to beautiful. Values way. This was presented to the media with a Brand Film and Heritage video that encompasses the extraordinary journey of the company started by Dame Anita Roddick. Meanwhile, Ms. Joy Palomar, The Body Shop® Asia Pacific Regional Retail Manager, shared the campaigns through the years and the continuing initiatives like the recent TRY AGAIN awareness and the Stop Violence in the Home.

Unveiled at the event were two new product ranges that pay homage to the miracles of nature. Wellbeing range and the new Autumn Trend Make-up, Jewels of Desire. The Wellbeing range was designed to answer the modern day everyone through products with active natural ingredients centered on traditional remedies. The trendy Jewels of Desire collection with a vibrant make-up demonstration and featured the three looks: day, night and evening looks that was be done using this collection. The audience was awed as this was completed in under 10 minutes. Carmee Cimatu, the winner of the recent Regional Make up Competition highlighted two winning creation look on the delight of the crowd.

The Grand Celebration at the Shangri-la Mall was a weekend long affair and redigners were treated to day-two massages and make-over available at the booths. The event was co-presented by Shangri-la Mall, Cebu Sony, Ambassador and media sponsors Manila Bulletin Lifestyle section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Lifestyle Network and Hyper FM.

LIVELY The popular nurses' blonde queen.

SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre • Assistant Editor Rita F. Avila

Do 'Gossip Girl' stars get to keep their wardrobe from the show?

LOS ANGELES—IN PART TWO of our feature on "Gossip Girl," one of television's much-buzzed about shows, we share excerpts of our press con with the second set of stars: Blake Lively, Penn Badgley and Jessica Szohr.

Blake, your nieces may have told you by now, plays Serena, the blonde queen in "Gossip Girl's" world of loving and hickering students in a posh New York high school. She and Penn, who portrays Dan Humphrey, are cute and effective swordsmen. Jessica plays Vanessa, a rebel from Brooklyn who's Dan's friend, who dreams on this Upper East Side clique of money, fashion and handsomes. All this drama—or comedy, if you will—is organized by an anonymous blogger named, well, Gossip Girl.

What was your own high school experience like?

Penn: Mine was sort of monumental. On paper, I didn't ever go to high school. I went for a couple of months and then, I graduated early. I took the California State High School Proficiency Examination, then I started taking community college courses [at Santa Monica College]. I was 16. Over three years, until I was 17, I got enough credits to transfer as a sophomore to USC (University of Southern California), but I deferred admission. I was working and getting all my classes in editorial. You know, it's like the Hollywood life. It was good college, so I loved it. So, but, I was at Santa Monica College is a great campus. It's one of the things I miss about LA.

SCOHR: A little flirtation with Chuck.

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rubert V. Nepales

Blake: Mine was very different [from the one on the show]. I grew up in the LA area—in a small town, Southlake, where my parents' grandparents went to the same school. Three years after I graduated from high school, where the homecoming queen was in town, if I wished into 1800 [International House of Beauties] wearing the opposing team's color, I was shunned. It was very much a small-town mentality. I was very involved with school and band stuff. I dressed up as the Ball Dog mascot for football games.

Football team

Jessica: I grew up in a very small town that was really considered a village back then. Now, there are more people there. The football team was a big deal. Everyone's parents went on Friday nights, and everyone was involved with the Student Council. I wouldn't have wanted to any other way!

What we can look forward to in the show's second season?

Penn: There are other love interests. I mean, it's one of those relationships that, in this genre, you're always going to get that push and pull. Will they or won't they? For him, I think he's not having as much on the love front. He's searching for life in order to search for writing, which sounds banal, sounds—but that's the way he wants to go about it. He dabbles in the dark side this season with Chuck Bass [played by Ed Westwick] as much as he might love it. There's always the another—his relationship with Serena. It's always going to be something there's present with him, because she was his first love.

Blake: There are new love interests for Serena. The interesting thing about this is that Serena was a bad girl. She just kept romancing and trying to be good—done, she met Dan. She avoids finding out who she is as a person and who she's going to become. Because she has this other person. She still needs a bit of the penny that she had before. She was able to hell-bent into that darkness when she was with Dan. She does rise to power this season, and she's finding that balance. She starts an artist rebirth in his life. He's a free spirit, and he tries to break her out of her shell. But, as much as he's helping Serena as a person, there's still that romance tug with Dan.

Jessica: I'm thinking that Vanessa will meet a guy in Brooklyn or something, because I don't know if she can deal with those kids from the Upper East Side or Hunt. She has a little flirtation with Chuck in a couple

>>> B3

BADGLEY: Dabbles in the dark side this season.

Kids' flick is more than just another sci-fi fantasy

By Nestor Torre

WE HAVE ALL BEEN AFRAID OF the dark in one point in our lives, and it's a fear that never really goes away; it is the subtle overtone of this visceral feeling that gives the movie, "City of Ember," its edge, making it much more than just another kids' sci-fi/fantasy flick.

Adapted from the first book of the same title from Jeanne DuPrau's acclaimed four-volume "The Books of Ember" series, "The City of Ember" is set underground, where the last remnants of humanity shut out an unknown in a city powered by a gigantic whose workings the city's now no longer understand completely. It sounds bleak, but the Ember you'll see onscreen doesn't look as grim as it seems.

Richly imagined by production designer Martin Laing, the city is a world of dazzling industrial grates and contraptions, lit by the mellow yellow lights of thousands of electric bulbs hanging suspended from a network of cables that crisscross overhead. The palette is a mix of rusty nanometal hues and the gunmetal shell metal of old machinery, and always hopping, as the subjects in the impenetrable dark.

ROMAN: Portrays a curious young doer in Gil Kenan's "City of Ember."

Allegorical

Ember is an utopia, but it's not dystopian, either—it's a mix of both. You can make the claim that it's allegorical—as in the real world, the people of Ember, who have grown to rely completely on the generator and their food supplies, are hard to shake out of their complacency even when it's obvious that supplies are running low and the lights are going out one by one.

Ember is a fully realized world, and the striking visuals make it easy for the audience to suspend its disbelief and ignore the gaps in logic and holes in the plot, as do the fast pacing and a running time of only 94 minutes. While it looks a little dim in places, the movie is something that even older kids can enjoy.

Directed by Gil Kenan ("Monster House") from a screenplay adapted by Caroline Thompson ("Edward Scissorhands"), it stars Saoirse Ronan, Harry Treadaway, Bill Murray, Tim Robbins, Martin Landau, Marianne Jean-Baptiste and Mary Kay Place.

Discovery

Ronan, who turned in some memorable performances in "Atonement," plays Lina Mayfleet, a curious youngster who stumbles onto something that could mean the salvation of Ember. The generator is failing and, while the lazy corrupt Mayor Sharkey (a fun lazy bum) and his actions double-talk everyone else, Lina and her friend, Doon Harrow (Treadaway), set out to discover to find a way back into the outside world.

The production's plot and characters are typical of many fantasy, sci-fi and coming-of-age tales, but the story is well-told. The two young leads are feisty and engaging, and the adults do a good job of supporting them. Most of all, it's a movie that's complete in itself, finding no need to resort to pop-cultural references and gimmickry to engage viewers' attention.

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Do 'Gossip Girl' stars . . .

From page B1

of episodes coming up, but they can't reveal much either, so we'll see where it goes.

Influence

Blake, you have an influence on the young generation. I saw a teenager, who's around 15 years old, who told the sales clerk at Saleman Sharon that she would like to have the same dress and shirt that your character had on the show. The girl spent about a thousand dollars. Do you feel guilty?

Blake: I do (laughter). But, her mother should tell her not to spend a thousand dollars! When I watch TV or movies and see some fun wardrobe, I'd go to "Forever 21" and make my own version of those clothes. If you go to see website or look at magazines, they show you ways to get Serena's look for less. I don't pay all that money for Serena's look. I'll take an idea and say, "I like what Serena wears, but they're really expensive," so I'll do Serena's look for less. I'll just trust myself every now and then.

Do you keep clothes from the show?

Blake: Yes, I definitely do (laughter). Clothes go missing!

Penn: Yes, the costumers do the show for less or because we get all the clothes for free (laughter).

Blake: No. Sometimes I borrow and sometimes I don't give them back (laughter). But, I also share my clothes with the show. I share handbags—Chanel, Burberry and Gucci. It's great that we have a look that is classy, frilly and brings drama with such class and elegance for young women. It's also cool to be wearing oneself tops, with my own charm bracelets, if girls want to emulate our characters' style, that makes me happy because it's a very classy look!

E-mail renegades_USA@yahoo.com, and read Ani Mag, "The Blunder Report," on http://blogs.inquirer.net/reputeyreport.

Stormy weather

From page B1

endearing love of the people she cares most about, she eventually regains a hold on her life, even without the man who had made it worth living again.

So, what's wrong with this picture? It's too small, predictable and didactic. Although the snowy town of Bolsterbo has beautiful and powerful vistas, most of this movie's key scenes are set indoors. In that circumscribed setting, viewers begin to realize that this production is less of a film than it is a TV drama.

Two characters

Since only two characters figure in many of its scenes, even experienced actors like Dinn and Lane end up repeating themselves until eventually overplaying their welcome.

Lane, in particular, quickly loses her initial

Greenbelt 5
Glorietta
Glorietta 4
Landmark
Rustan's
Ayala Malls
Serendra
Fully Booked
Bench
Gaisano Mall
Robinsons Galleria
Robinsons Place
Robinsons Manila
Robinsons Ermita

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

B.LUTH — BY BOB WEBER JR.

PUGAD BABOY — BY PAT LIM JR.

DICK TRACY

LOVEBOMOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHOPKOLD

JAMES BOND

DINING COMEDY — BY STEVEN PABALINAS

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

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PUGONG — BY MARK COLL

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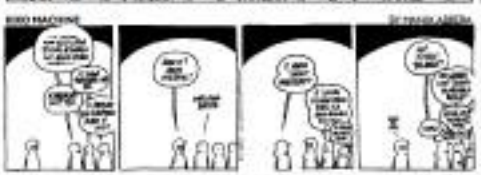


BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Matthew Higgins
Demand, NH

1:01:08

Friday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

2			6					8
		6		4				
			9				4	
						9		3
	5		7	1	9		2	
7		4						
	8				5			
				3		1		
1					4			6

Difficulty Level ★★★★

1:01:1

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	3	4	6	7	8	9	1	2
6	7	2	1	9	5	3	4	8
1	9	8	3	4	2	5	6	7
8	5	9	7	6	1	4	2	3
4	2	6	8	5	3	7	9	1
7	1	3	9	2	4	8	5	6
9	6	1	5	3	7	2	8	4
2	8	7	4	1	9	6	3	5
3	4	5	2	8	6	1	7	9

HBO airs election drama tonight

By Edmund L. Sicam

IN RECENT YEARS, THE WINner of the US presidential race has usually been known on the evening of election day. So, in the late hours of Nov. 7, 2000, everyone expected either Vice President Al Gore or Gov. George W. Bush to be proclaimed the next President of the United States.

In fact, Gore had already called Bush to concede and was on his way to a gathering of supporters to announce his decision. Then, after the TV networks corrected their initial projection and announced that Bush had won in Florida, thus clinching enough electoral votes to win the presidency.

SPACEY fits Al Gore's chief of staff, Ron Klain.

At the last minute, the Vice President changed his mind because his aides had informed him that he had lost by only .5 percent of the total votes cast and, by law, this was enough reason to call for a recount. Time began the unprecedented legal battle between the Gore and Bush camps that would stretch for 36 days, with the Democrats fighting for a recount of the votes in Florida, and the Republicans maneuvering their lawyers to run disputing ballots to the recount couldn't be accomplished by the court-designated deadline.

Bush finally emerged as the winner, thanks to a decision of the US Supreme Court to stop the recount. Ironically Gore won the nationwide popular vote, but lost in the electoral college.

Controversial polls

"Recount," which airs tonight at 9 on HBO with replays tomorrow at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., and on Nov. 4 at 11 p.m., depicts the events surrounding the controversial polls in Florida. The docudrama stars Kevin Spacey, Laura Dern, Tom Wilkinson, John Hurt, Denis Leary, Bob Balaban and Ed Begley Jr.

Although the movie purports to be an objective account of the

HBO 13

Stormy weather

By Nestor U. Torre

GERE AND LANE. Confident and insightful performances.

RICHARD GERE AND DIANE Lane are experienced and sensitive actors, so their performances in their latest film, "Nights in Rodanthe," are especially confident and insightful.

As strangers separately trying to get over some traumatic experiences, they effortlessly blur the desperation felt by mature people as they try to find peace, happiness and love again, before it's too late.

Personal anguish

In Gere's character's case, his wife has left him, his only son feels estranged from him, and a patient of his dies during surgery on the operating table. The anguished doctor goes to the small town of Rodanthe where his patient's husband and son live, in order to settle the "issue," but finds them uncooperative, because he has failed to factor in their personal anguish.

This lack of personal sensitivity affects his other relationships as well, as the doctor is in the mood of "love therapy." Luckily for him, Lane's character is so kind to provide just that.

She has her own traumatic assembling blocks, (predictably, a philandering husband—who, not so predictably, now wants to come home). So, she's not about to engage in some romantic "bridal work" just now, thanks.

But, a storm traps them in the small hotel she's assisting for her best friend, and romance's passion ado off on the two hurting lost characters—and, the rest is romantic history.

Battling to Lane's healing love, Gere becomes a more sensitive person. So, when he visits his son, who's become a volunteer doctor abroad, they are able to make up for their years of estrangement.

Eventual return

For her part, Lane also comes to terms with her own life, and similarly blooms as she assists Gere's eventual return, as they save erstwhile beautiful life together.

Alas, life has one more surprise in store for her, and it isn't a happy one, but, throughout dint of character and the

SF RATED PG

VACC marks a milestone

Rhandy Vartuganes

THE NOLLYTERRIBLE fighter Crime and Corruption (VACC) recently marked its 10th year of fighting crime and corruption by conferring awards on 11 organizations and 16 personalities, described as "pillars of the criminal justice system."

Awardees included the Philippine Daily Inquirer ("Newspaper of the Decade") and reporter Ike Zamora ("News Reporter of the Year"). Fr and I have been working together since the Inquirer was still a tabloid, under Tito Eggie Aporto and editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc's leadership. Pio received the tallest in the '80s in comm.

VACC was founded in 1998 by Dante Jimenez, Louie Tinio, Marita Diaz and Cory Quirino. It has been at the forefront of the crusade against criminality. The group understands what the victims and their relatives go through because they've been through the same experience.

PJI Zamora (second from left), with Rhandy, the author, Jimenez and Chua.

Jimenez lost a brother in a senseless killing; Vizconde lost his wife and two daughters, and Quirino was kidnapped in Bicol in the '90s.

The group's other awardees: Rodolfo Biazon-Senate; Engr. Nelson Rambay, and prosecutors Dan Abelgas of Channel 2 and Sun Nielson of GMA.

* * *

Join the Manly Navarro Runners Photo Salon Invitational February and May 2009. Early registration (till December) gets a discount. Batch April 12-13, 2007 will join the Negros 14-gauge Festival on Nov. 22. Email manlynavarro@yahoo.com, call 409-1747.

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1	2	3	4			
GLORIETTA 4	1	2	3				
	4	5	6	7			
GREENBELT 1	1	2					
GREENBELT 3	1	2					
	3	4	5				
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1	2					
	3	4	5				
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	2	3	4			
MARKET! MARKET!	1	2					
	3	4	5				
TRINOMA	1	2	3	4			
	5	6	7				

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — DJ ENERGY 101: The Ngelngel Sing-Along, November 7 to 11am, Open & Open, Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — MICHAEL JOHNSON LIVE, November 21, Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — MADAGASCAR 2 PENGUIN MALL TOUR, November 14 & 22, Cinema Lobby & Pond Choices, 2pm

Ayala Center Cebu — GLOBE MEGA SALE, November 7 to 9, Activity Center

Market! Market! — ENCHANTED KINGDOM SPECIAL SHOW, November 2, Activity Center

Greenbelt — Repertory Philippines presents A Grifol Table Cabbie, The Musical, November 14 to December 21, 2008

Ayala Museum — LIKHAAN!, Opening with 21 Innovative Quilts at Glorietta 4 Park

Tri Noma — TOOTS GAMETIME, Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, Activity Center; DANCE HEAVEN, Oct. 29 - Nov. 2, 4th level Activity Center

Glorietta · Greenbelt · Alabang Town Center · Ayala Center Cebu · Market! Market! · Trinoma · Tri Noma

I ❤ umindak sa Huling El Bimbo
Tuluy-tuloy ang ligaya ng barkada.
Sony Ericsson

IN THIS ISSUE
How stars cope with grief /F3

SATURDAY Special

Tina Fey owes Sarah Palin a debt of gratitude

FEY (LEFT): Her Palin impersonation has helped make the VP bet (right) more "accessible" to viewer voters.

By Hector U. Sierra

THIS IS TINA FEY'S YEAR. —Tina who? She's the "Saturday Night Live" comic who's an exact copy of Republican VP bet Sarah Palin, whom she spoofs with great zest and gratitude.

—Until lately, because Palin has boosted Fey's comedic career in a big way—and hoisted up "SNL's" ratings, as well. The long-running sked show currently plays to its biggest TV audience ever, which lugs up its cut-Ginger political satire, especially now that the US elections are coming up fast.

Impressive succession

But, Palin isn't Fey's main meal ticket, even before the campaign, she chalked up impressive successes in the movies as pre-lactant and subjectless, starting with "Mean Girls" in 2004.

Early this year, Fey and former "SNL" castmate, Amy Poehler, starred in "Baby Mama," about a businesswoman (Fey) who hires a surrogate (Poehler) to give her the child she wants. Currently Fey is writing the script for a new film, "Crafty Dickie and Mr. Thrill," about a Hasbro rock musician and all shenigans.

On TV, Fey has struck gold with her popular sitcom, "30 Rock," which she writes and stars in. It's based on her "crazy" experiences on "SNL". She has weighty commission on the show; Fey has won a Golden Globe and a(nother) Actors Guild (award).

Fey's acting-writing career has been doing so well that she was chosen by "Time Magazine last year as one of its 100 People Who Shape Our World...and she was included in People magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People" list some years ago.

All told, Fey has won five Emmys, a Golden Globe and a SAG award. But, it's her scores of Sarah Palin impersonations on "SNL" that viewers are currently raving about.

34th season

It's become an especially big deal because Palin is a VP bet, and because Fey can make herself look and sound exactly like her. Fey unveiled her Palin spoof on the premiere episode of the show's 34th season, and it quickly became NBC.com's most-watched video, with more than five million hits.

How did Palin react? The VP bet's handlers said she was amused—particularly because she had once dressed up as Tina Fey for Halloween! Fey's comedic impersonations of Palin was such a big hit that repeats were inevitable—last Sept. 27 and Oct. 4.

The Oct. 4 episode was so popular that it gave "SNL" a 58-percent audience increase, prompting executive producer Lorne Michaels to giddily exclaim, "I think the gods smiled on us with this Palin thing."

Last Oct. 18, "SNL" upped the ante even more when it got Palin herself to appear together with her dead-ringer lookalike in a scene that gave viewers an especially giddy comedic high.

And, last Oct. 25, Fey as Palin appeared with "John McCain," and "President George W. Bush" gave theirs his-and-hers moments.

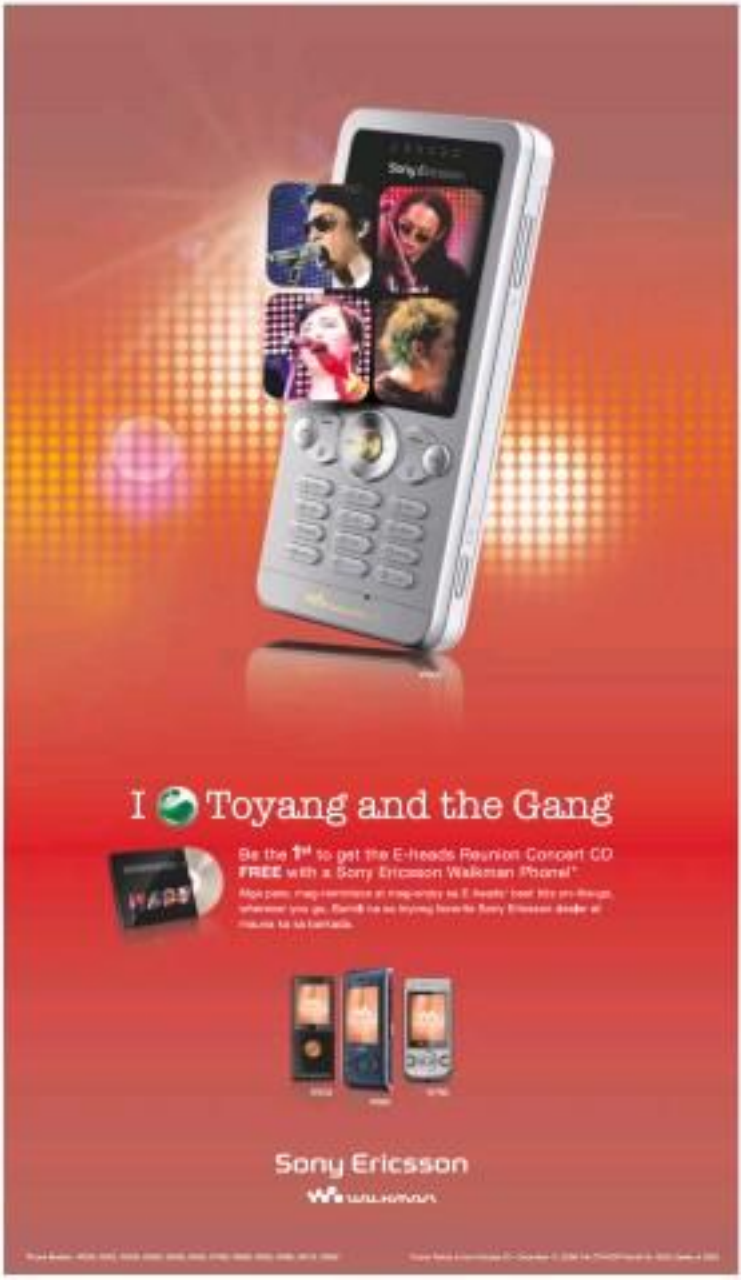
Ability

Fey's Palin impersonation has made her an even bigger star than ever; conversely, it's also helped make Palin more "accessible" to viewer-voters, since her ability to tell with the punches has shown what "a good sport" she is.

What's up for Tina Fey? With her heightened popularity, she can be expected to star in and write increasingly bigger TV-film projects, and could end up as her generation's top comedienne.

What's her advice to young people who also want to make it in the extremely competitive and demanding field of comedy?

Fey shares, "Improv had the biggest impact on my writing, so I urge everyone to go into it. Improvisation forces you to focus entirely on your partner in a scene that you're both spontaneously creating together. Improv is a version of method acting that works for me. It can work for you, too!"



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GALLERIA

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 CITY of EMBER
4 THE HOUSE BUNNY
5 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
6 MAX PAYNE
7 EAGLE EYE / BODY of LIES
8 Imelda'Mae: ALTAR
9 NIGHTS in RODANTHE
10 TROPIC THUNDER / LIVING HELL

ERMITA

1 THE HOUSE BUNNY
2 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
3 CITY of EMBER
4 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
5 MY ONLY Ü
6 RESERVED
7 RESERVED
8 NIGHTS in RODANTHE / LIVING HELL
9 MAX PAYNE

METRO EAST

1 THE HOUSE BUNNY
2 CITY of EMBER
3 MY ONLY Ü
4 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
5 NIGHTS in RODANTHE
6 MAX PAYNE
7 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
8 LIVING HELL

NOVALICHES

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 RESERVE
3 THE HOUSE BUNNY
4 MY ONLY Ü

PIONEER

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 CITY of EMBER
4 THE HOUSE BUNNY

STA. ROSA

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 TROPICAL THUNDER
3 THE HOUSE BUNNY
4 MY ONLY Ü

LIPA

1 MAX PAYNE
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 MY ONLY Ü
4 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
5 EAGLE EYE

DASMARIÑAS

1 NIGHTS in RODANTHE
2 THE HOUSE BUNNY
3 MY ONLY Ü
4 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3

IMUS

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 THE HOUSE BUNNY
4 TROPIC THUNDER

ANGELES

1 BODY of LIES
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
4 THE HOUSE BUNNY

STARMILLS

1 THE HOUSE BUNNY
2 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
3 THE STRANGERS
4 MY ONLY Ü
5 BODY OF LIES
6 APPALOOSA

BACOLOD

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 THE HOUSE BUNNY
3 MY ONLY Ü
4 APPALOOSA
5 BODY of LIES
6 APPALOOSA

ILOILO

1 HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3
2 MY ONLY Ü
3 APPALOOSA
4 THE HOUSE BUNNY
5 MAG-INGAT KA SA KULAM
6 MUTANT CHRONICLES

SNEAK PREVIEW

Award-worthy performances boost adorable coming-out tale

By Rica F. Acio

ROCCO JACKSON-ROSA AND TOMMY ABUEL provide the heart and soul of Ronaldo Bertolotti's touching gay-themed mini-saga, "Lovebirds," in which the accidental encounters between Marcelino and Aurelio Cebinhag progress slowly—a loving couple in Laguna whose conservative lives are turned upside down when their secretive hotheist son, Antonio (Joseph Jean), announces that he's finally found his romantic other half in the person of Alexis, scion of the Estrellas.

The excitement in the Cebinhag household—and in their community as well—reaches a fever pitch when Mario breaks the news that his cousin "friend" from Spain has decided to fly to the Philippines to meet him!

So, Imelda prepares a lavish bienvenida party for her son's mysterious visitor. At last, her shabby son has decided to take a bride! But, imagine her consternation when Mario's estranged father, Alexis Fernandez (Chris Gutierrez), arrives instead! Turns out he's been invited by Alexis Fernandez! How's that for a Gudoy upbabay-coming-out party?

ROLANDO ABUEL. Plays wife and husband in Bertolotti's "Lovebirds," front. Rosario here (right).

Sexual content

We're so swinger to gay-themed films, and we're no prude. In our book, Ang Lee's couple romance drama, "Brokeback Mountain," came among the best two movies of all time. Locally, recent notable features with gay themes and sexual content include Paolo Villaluna and Allen Ramos' "Bekbek," Auraeus Solito's "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros," Joel Lamangan's "Rosenwater," Jeuffer Abanilla's "Ang Lolalo sa Hawaii," Bertolotti's "Mila," and Brillante Mendoza's "Kaleldo" and "Kinatay," which are unfortunately unappreciated long before the national director started winning those awards.

"These days, however, sexually explicit, gay-themed productions are a dime a dozen. Unfortunately, they're nowhere as good as the aforementioned films in terms of thematic precision or technical competence. In fact, many of these have obviously been produced as an excuse to show genitalia on sex or nudity.

Not so "Lovebirds" introduces viewers to the other, less-strawy aspects of the so-called alternative lifestyle—or that side that involves well-meaning friends, meaningful parents and doting families. Alexis and Mario are by no means perfect, but their devotion are not ruled by the libidinous stirrings of their loins.

Bertolotti uses humor to show how same-sex relationships are presented in a society that has little tolerance for things that go against their predominantly Catholic, conservative upbringing. He assures great performances from the whole cast—even Alexis and Mario's melodramatic moments are executed with homely conviction and flair.

Public perception

But, it's Rocco Jackson-Rosa and Tommy Abuel (Though his role is too showy) who run away with the film. One truly exceptional, award-worthy romantic dream. Ceiling something his emotionally distraught with, and asking why public perception has become more important to his than their son's happiness.

Moreover, we have not seen a lesser, more sound-pleasing portrayal from the soundly pato-and-proper host for grammatically challenged character provides the movie with some priceless comic respect. Examples: "Tawo wowowee (whatever) ano a real blessing to the dalom?" Whatever you want to do, it's up to the discretion of the two of you." "If you don't believe me, you can swear here and look at yourself!" And she delivers them with deadpan pleasure!

The film's best lessons aren't culled from Mario and Alexis' romantic dilemma, they're derived from the touching relationship shared by the story's "other" lovebirds: Celing and Amelia. In fine and Abuel's able hands, the elderly couple is depicted as caring partners who remain solid pals at situations they can't control, but whose love for their son—and each other—allows them to bend and give their child his chance at love!

Genre flicks ...

Turn to page F4

PHILBUD. Former boxer battles ghosts.

Both and Bole in their rigger-comedy existence, retired boxer, Arnon Manjuat (Zaijon Marvels, in a surprisingly strong performance), confronts a more terrifying (nonworld affair he's hired to as a carpenter to renovate a decrepit house in the outskirts of Cavite.

Arnon and his partner, Lope (Soy Domingo), are forewarned to leave the unfinished basement alone at all cost, but curiosity eventually gets the better of them. In Arnon's case long for them to resist. But, inside this eldery house, things indeed go bump in the night—then, the ghost of a distraught girl begins to haunt Arnon and beg him for help!

Bardo's ghost stories ("Sa Balon ng Cogon") are nothing new, but he tells them with the confidence of a filmmaker who's aware of the conventions... as well as the limitations ... of the genre.

With movies like this, viewers need to go easy on the logic-challenged gaffes and allow for suspension of disbelief, as they can fully enjoy the visceral thrill of their mindlessly entertaining, but terrifying premise!

How stars cope with grief

By Lito Berlongan-Alvarez

TWO HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES revealed much about themselves when they greeted their hearts on bidets reporters after the deaths of their sons. The late Paul Newman, whose son died in 1978 from a drug overdose, told Barbara Walters' Jan 16, then that he seemed almost resolutely a different man.

Memon noted: "Newman was never the same again. In interviews, almost all cancers of gibberish were gone—they were replaced by monotone and sadness, as well as an inability to bring as near as he could be to a world overcome by normality. How do you measure a cancer against the death of a son? You don't. That's why his performances after his son's passing were so much sharper, subtler and more interested."

Newman focused on his work, but he later revealed that, as he got older, he cared less about the quality of his films than the quality of the people he made them with.

Disabilities

Bill Cosby's son, Ennis, a dyslexic who had helped others rise above their disabilities, was shot to death in 1997 on the side of the Los Angeles freeway while he was changing a flat tire.

Cosby coped by immersing himself in his work. He shared: "You can turn painful situations around through laughter. If you can find humor in anything, you'll survive it."

In the first few months, though, he said it was very hard because "people would look at me with such sad faces. I was used to people seeing me smiling and laughing."

Even when his pain was almost unbearable, he never thought of giving up his work. "Comedy is when I do, and nothing can change that. I like to make people laugh," the well-loved comic added.

Cosby did not retreat into isolation and self-pity. Instead, he chose to be in the public eye and reinvented himself with grace and dignity. Redirecting his focus as "my hero," he and his family set up a charitable foundation that would promote the early detection and treatment of dyslexia.

He also published books for children with learning disabilities. In 1998, he released the jazz album, "Hello Friend: To Ennis with Love," in memory of his beloved son.

COSBY. Turns painful situations around through laughter.

From page F1

Nescafé Soundskool 2008's . . .

Gary Valenciano's silver anniversary concert, "Gary V Live at 25," on Nov. 14 and 15 at the Araneta Coliseum, has a glittering roster of stellar guests—Jaclyn Jaime, Kamille, Rachel Anne Go, Ang Comunidad, Lauren Lozada, Sitverinaya, Imperfect, Hiromi Ikeda, Saheera, Gee S, Regada, Klamaravan, Philippine All-Stars, G-Force, Streetplay, plus Pedro, Gabriel and Miguel Valenciano.

Gary, who's also the show's concept and artistic director, has lined up a similarly stellar production team—Rowell Santiago for direction and Mon Medina for musical direction. Concert beneficiary is the Shining Light Foundation. Call 721-4481, loc. 201 or 913-5555.

Tourism in Laguna

The Laguna Business and Investment Expo 2008 will be held from Nov. 5 to 9 at SM City Bacoor, Cavite. On Nov. 7, "Bacolod, Ordinary and Ano Day" showcases the performing arts of Laguna, featuring the Tanglaw Theater Artists, Barangkitan Dance Troupe and Enchanted Kingdom's Jungle and Tribe Dancers. Guests of honor are Tourism Secretary Joseph E. Durano and Bora's Senior Bea.

The Kanyogubon Dance Troupe was featured at the Best Group in the International Folk Festival in Peru, and received the Prix du Public at the Folklorades et Fete chile Vigne in Orleans, France.

Laguna's prime attractions include the Real Shrine in Calamba, Pagsanjan Falls, Nagcarlan's Underground Cemetery, Lake Caliraya, Hidden Valley Springs, Sampaloc Lake in San Pablo, Enchanted Kingdom, Splash Island and Laguna Hot Springs, Calamba.

'Ten Commandments' on Hallmark

On Nov. 1 at 9 p.m., the first part of the biblical epic, "Ten Commandments," will be shown on the Hallmark Channel. Part Two will be screened on Nov. 8. In the popular film, Egypt's Pharaoh is driven by a soothsayer's dire prophesy to order the slaughter of all newborn babies. But one child, Moses, escapes death and eventually discovers his true heritage. Charlton Heston stars.

HESTON. Plays Moses in epic.

'Cory' ticket outlet

Tickets for the much-awaited "Cory" musical, on the life and times of former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, are available at Stairstuff Bills Store's Customer Service section. Call 715-1000 or 651-51-00.

'Start Up'

Premiering on Thursday, Nov. 6 at 8:30 p.m., ANC's new business magazine show, "Start Up," is hosted by Boni Aquino.

'Quantum of Solace' premiers

The latest James Bond caper, "Quantum of Solace," will have its Philippine gala/celebrity premiere on Nov. 3 at The Medium. In the film, Bond (Daniel Craig) is determined on track down the mastermind behind the sinister organization, Quantum, and finds an unlikely ally in the beautiful and feisty Camille (Olga Kurylenko).

Movies on TV

On HBO today at 10:45 a.m., "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix." Tomorrow at 9 a.m., "The Perfect Storm." Nov. 3 at 3 p.m., "The Invasion." Nov. 4 at 7 p.m., "Enemy of the State." Nov. 5 at 1 p.m., "Charlotte's Web." Nov. 6 at 8:30 a.m., "The Good Shepherd." Nov. 7 at 9 a.m., "Superman."

On Cinemax today at 7 a.m., "The Day of the Locust." Tomorrow at 9 p.m., "Hidden Camera." Nov. 3 at 7 a.m., "Around the World in 80 Days." Nov. 4 at 11 p.m., "Hitchhiker." Nov. 5 at 7 a.m., "To Catch A Thief." Nov. 6 at 3 p.m., "Misdemeanors." Nov. 7 at 9 p.m., "Dracula."

UPSA concerts

Catch the University of the Philippines Singing Ambassadors' homecoming concert on Nov. 4, 7:30 p.m., at the Philam Life Auditorium, 8/F ave., Manila, and Nov. 15, 7 p.m., at the Church of the Risen Lord in UP Diliman. Call 924-5555 or text 0929 561-4391.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON TINSELTOWN'S WALL,

Who's the fairest star of all?

By Dulce Cervantes

GARDNER: World's Most Beautiful Animal.

IN THE EARLY '50s, a WORLD-circulated Hollywood magazine gathered a select panel of photographers, cinematographers and makeup artists to choose "Hollywood's "Most Beautiful Actresses."

Using bone structure, coloring, photogenic qualities and versatility of looks as criteria, the grand winners turned out to be Ava Gardner. A surprise No. 2 was another dark-haired beauty, the petite Ann Blyth, who was known for sweet roles in musicals. Elizabeth Taylor played third, and evil, hot-eyed, green-eyed bombshell Audrey Dalton, who, as "Hollywood" by Sheila Pinkerton, Lowell Redelings and Diana Massey.

Sara Taylor, Elizabeth's notorious mother, roamed a separate table for her lovely daughter, as she convinced gossip doyenne, Louella Parsons, to declare the raven-haired, violet-eyed young star "The World's Most Beautiful Girl." Now she then 17-year-old actress was indeed gorgeous, an ultra-quarantined Russian obviously conceived rife.

Extramarital affair

By then, Ava was already a full-fledged woman and was a conveyor of two stormy affairs: one with Mickey Rooney and Artie Shaw. In fact, Le Ava was involved in a torrid extramarital affair with French financier, Sir Nancy Mantz's eyewitnesses, "Victor" was a more appropriate appellation for Gardner!

Not long after Ava was cast in "The Barefoot Contessa," studio publicists who wanted to continue the actress' position as Hollywood's Most Beautiful thought up another title for her: "The World's Most Beautiful Animal"—a title that left no doubt that the gorgeous Ava reigned supreme over you, oh, elephants, peacocks and threescreened!

More than a decade realized, Hollywood declared Hedy Lamarr "The World's Most Beautiful Woman." Indeed, as her peak, Hedy was truly beautiful beyond words! Her controversial nude swimming scene in "Ecstasy" displayed her physical assets extremely.

In the mid-'50s, Hedy de Lamarrie decided to produce "Helen of Troy." Naturally, "the film that launched a thousand ships" had to have unquestionable beauty and allure, so a young Italian starlet, Rossana Podesta, was chosen for the role. The raven-haired beauty was made to don a blonde wig, but it diminished her screen appeal.

Shapely figure

Alas, despite a shapely figure, Podesta didn't possess a seductive personality to complement her beautiful face. Years earlier, she "trailed" Ingrid Bergman in "Stromboli" scandal, was considered to portray the legendary beauty, but by the time the Hussein epic was filmed, the Swedish beauty had matured and was no longer appropriate for the role. Hollywood's predecessor for classic beauties ended with Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn.

These days, those who matter in Hollywood are noted for their great personality more than their physical beauty: Julia Roberts possesses a mouth that's too big for the old days' standards. Angelina Jolie's lips are too bodacious, and Reese Witherspoon's facial features would have looked ordinary decades ago. Only Michelle Pfeiffer and Jodie Foster would have survived the transition of modern-day stereotypes as they seemed to the likes of Gardner, Taylor, Dahl, Gaynor and Dreese!

NOW SHOWING

Genre flicks provide mindless musical mirth, mystery

By Nicolt Aala

HUGGING AND SYNCING: Basil and real-life sweetheart.

THIS WEEK, WHILE THE SQUEAKY-clean singing-and-dancing teenage kids of Kenny Ortega's "High School Musical 3: Senior Year" hung, grind and shimmy their farewell (four more), Rico Maria Ilarde's supernatural comedy in "Valor" also deconstructing of their roots, albeit of the paranormal variety—in the basement of a long-abandoned haunted house in Cavite!

Attention-seeking twins

The popular teen franchise makes the leap in the big screen as Troy Bolton (Zac Efron), Gabriella Montez (Vanessa Hudgens), Chad Danforth (Corbin Bleu), Taylor McKessie (Monique Coleman), Kelsi Nielsen (Olesya Rulin) and the undoubtedly attention-seeking twins, Sharpay and Ryan Evans (Ashley Tisdale and Lucas Grabeel, respectively), prepare to leave the Disney happy bubble of Albuquerque's East High School in New Mexico.

The senior prom, the rigorous rehearsals for the spring stage musical and Sharpay's narcissistic fame-ego are the least of Troy and Gabriella's worries as they contemplate a different future each other. The academic school jock is torn between accepting a basketball scholarship at the state university and pursuing musical theater at the fabled School in New York, while his exquisite-looking partner grudgingly leaves East High earlier than the rest of the gang where she's accepted into Stanford University's honors program.

Efron makes the lonely ego to the Disney Boys a memorable one—and, in "High School Musical3" mode, every moment is a dance floor, even a junkyard! With his dreamy movie-star looks, charm-heavy emoting and tone-fully-like voice-thrown that, he whips his doe-eyed colleagues into a song-and-dance fury that's guaranteed to chase the butterflies from your stomach.

Hudgens isn't required to do much, but she is nonetheless radiant and resplendent in her signature garb. But, it's Tisdale who charms her way into viewers' hearts as the flagrantly manipulative everything and everyone-to-get the lion's share of the limelight. What a winsome screen vixen she makes!

Efron and company effortlessly bring back the song-enhanced vigor and vitality of the movie musical genre, but the expansive big-screen format also magnifies the film's flimsy production values. In this grand universe, the school jock with musical-theater ambitions gets to deliver the class valedictory? "Significant" idea, isn't it?

Adult life

Yes, their unhappy world is far removed from the brooding realities of adult life as we know it, but dark joy-ride even serves no purpose—it's welcome respite from and uplifting dramatic panacea for the economic doom and gloom around us!

While the kids of Albuquerque

NEWS F1

Lessons learned in the biz

By Nestor U. Torre

AS WE WORK IN THE BIZ, WE continue to learn valuable lessons that we must still inform our actions in response to some.

Last week, we "shared" to make an "educated" guess about the final three survivors on "Celebrity Duets." Alas, we ended up with egg on our face, because we mistakenly thought that Jose Manalo, training female Rustin, Carlene Aguilar, would be one of them.

Well, the show's viewer-voters have spoken, and she isn't. The final verdict is an all-male lineup: Joey Marquez, Bayani Fernando and Al Tantay. So, there.

Our big mistake was to judge on point of quality of performance. We should have revealed ourselves that, on "Celebrity Duets," it's the ones that worst, and some finalists have bigger and better "voter-generating machines" than others.

Lesson learned: When a competition's outcome is decided by viewers' votes, don't "dare" to predict their outcome, because the governing factors are per-penalty in flux, and well nigh impossible to evaluate.

Thus, despite the fact that we correctly predicted the winners of the 2006 "Nanasion Idol" (Jessa Zaragoza), "Star Circle Quest" (Christian Bautista), "Pinoy Dream Academy" (Nikki Gil), "Pinoy Idol" (Jed Madela), "Celebrity Duets" (Richard Poon) and